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OR,

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BY EDWIN EMERSON,

AUTHOR OF "RED KNIFE, THE CHIEF," ETC., ETC

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DINGLE, THE OUTLAW.

CHAPTER I.

A DEED OF THE DARKNESS.

ON the south bank of the Cumberland river a camp-fire was gleaming brightly through the darkness of a certain night many years ago. It cast its ruddy light upon the water that flowed by with a solemn sound, and made grotesque shadows here and there among the grand old trees of the great Tennessean forest, sending its thin, bluish smoke curling up through the dense foliage that formed an impenetrable canopy above.

Three men sat by it, their dress and equipments showing that they were hunters. One of them, who was evidently the youngest of the party, was a graceful, well-proportioned, fine-looking man, who had passed the summers of some eight and twenty years. He was remarkably prepossessing in feature, with cheeks slightly bronzed, but smooth as velvet, and he wore a broad-brimmed hat that cast a decided shade over his face. On the ground beside him lay a highly-polished silver-mounted rifle, such as few border-men of that day could afford to carry, and at his waist glittered the jeweled hilt of a fine dagger.

Near him was another person, who could scarcely have been more different in external appearance, although it could not be said that he was ill-looking in the face. This man sat on the ground in a very characteristic attitude, with one leg drawn up till the knee was on a level with his chin, and one arm thrown carelessly around his rifle, which rested against his shoulder. His age might have been anywhere between forty and fifty. The lower part of his face was covered with a thick, grizzly beard, and long exposure to the sun and wind

had made his skin as brown as a nut; but, for all that, he must have been almost handsome at one time of his life. His features were nearly regular, his eyes clear and sparkling, and the white, pearly teeth he possessed gave him a most pleasant look when he smiled. He was looking thoughtfully into the fire, and, unbeknown to him, his pipe had turned up-side down, spilling its contents on the ground.

The third and last member of the group sat on a log near the fire. He, also, held a pipe in his mouth, but, unlike that of the old ranger, it was right-side up and emitted wreaths of smoke. It required but a passing look to discover that this person was a jolly, devil-may-care Irishman, fresh from his native isle.

"A penny for your thoughts, Tom?" said the young man, after gazing at the motionless form of the old ranger for some time. "I am growing tired of your long silence. Wake up, and tell me what you are dreaming about."

"Wal," said the hunter, coming out of his reverie with a long breath, "you may call it dreamin' ef you like, but hyur's as thinks you will find a heap o' reality in it 'fore many days. My thoughts war on that cussed Shawnee Injun, Tecumseh, and the game he's been playin' lately. He's been circ'latin' in these parts for some time now, stirrin' up the southern tribes ag'in the whites, and the people all along the border may as well be countin' on trouble with the reds. The Creeks and Choctaws are goin' to do bloody business, sartin as my name's Tom Badger."

"I fear you are right," replied the young man. "Instigated by British agents, Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet, have planned a general rising against the whites, which they are now proceeding to carry out. The great chief has been exerting his influence among the neighboring tribes with alarming success, and it is said that the Creeks will not take great pains to withstand his eloquence. I fear the Indians will soon be united in one common cause—"

"*Fear*, did ye say?" put in the Irishman, looking up at the speaker. "Ye wouldn't say ye's *afraid*, would ye?—you, Philip Campbell, the bravest man in Smith's P'int, barrin' me-silf! Divil a worrid iv that can ye make Arran O'Rourke belave."

"Nor do I wish Arran O'Rourke to believe such a thing," returned Philip Campbell, with a smile. "You misunderstood me; I expressed no personal fear."

"Yas, I reckon thar'll be a gineral diggin' up o' the hatchet," said Tom Badger, musingly. "Tecumseh is an influential man among the Injuns, and he knows exactly how to talk to 'em to raise thar dander. I happened to hear him makin' a speech once, and I see'd how they'd been wronged by the wites clearer than I ever see'd it afore."

"I don't doubt it; everybody knows of his wonderful eloquence. With a few well-chosen words he infuses the spirit of revenge into their savage breasts, and it is my belief that he will soon have a desperate horde at his heels, ready to undertake any task he may see fit to impose on them."

"Wagh! thar'll be some tall fightin' when it comes to that."

"That there will, and I suppose Smith's Point will be among the first places attacked. If so, the Cumberland will be dyed with human blood before the garrison will surrender. Fortunately for us the commandant is a man of unrivaled courage."

"Howly Mother! let the fightin' come to-morrow," cried Arran O'Rourke. "It's the b'y from Ireland as wants to git a sthroke at the rid nagurs, jist. Only let me have a shtick, an' it's breakin' the heads iv ivery mother's son iv 'em I'll be."

"'Pears to me," said the scout, "that Congress is mighty back'ard in her work. Time sunkthin' war' bein' done to stop the up-risin' o' these red-skins. It strikes me purty forcible that Gineral Harrison ought to fall upon the Prophet's town, at the mouth of the Tippecanoe river, and destroy it while Tecumseh is absent."

"I believe he will if it's the right thing to do," said Philip Campbell, firmly. "I have great confidence in Harrison, and am satisfied that he will do the proper thing at the proper time."

"I *know* he will," declared Badger. "He's as good a man as I ever knowed, too. You recollect I done some scoutin' for him awhile back? When I left the Gineral, he tuck me by the hand and said he hated to part with me, and all that sort o' talk, jist as though I war his equal. Bold as he is,

the Gíneral is as tender-hearted as a woman. But, see hyur youngster ; speakin' o' women reminds me that I heard you talkin' 'bout one o' them critters last night in your sleep."

"Heard me talking about a woman in my sleep?" inquired Campbell, a bright flush rising to his tanned cheeks.

"Jist that, an' nothin' less," replied the ranger, exhibiting his pearly teeth as he smiled at his young friend's confusion. "I happened to be awake 'long to'ards mornin', and you begun to mumble 'bout a purty female as you hadn't see'd for a spell, and you kept sayin' you thought she war dead."

"Did I mention her name?"

"I b'lieve you did, but shoot me ef I don't forgit what it war. Let me see! You called her—you called her—I had it on my tongue then. *Leonola*—that's the name, ef I ain't mistook."

The flush faded away from the young man's face, and an expression of pain swept across in its trail. The scout, observing that he had made an unlucky remark, hastened to say :

"Thar', thar', youngster ; don't mind it. You know Tom Badger wouldn't 'a' said that ef he'd thought o' makin' you feel bad."

Philip looked up with a forced laugh.

"Don't mention it, Badger," he said. "You have not made me feel as badly as you suppose. The name you mentioned was unexpected, and awakened the memories of days long gone—that is all."

"Arrah, thin, it's in love ye are," drawled O'Rourke, who had only caught the drift of the conversation. "It's in love ye are, ye bla'guard, and av ye happens to have sech a thing as a flask about ye we'll all drink to the health iv yer swate-heart, sure."

"I have no sweetheart, Arran," replied Philip, "though I shall not deny that I was once so fortunate as to possess one."

"Indade? Where is she now?"

"Dead," he sadly answered. "I now recollect that I did dream of her last night, and thought that she was alive, but she has been dead five long years."

"P'raps you'll tell us 'bout her?" suggested Badger, respectfully.

The young man was silent for a moment. Then he replied

"Yes, I will tell you about my first love, if you think it will be of sufficient interest to kill time. Not long ago I could not speak calmly of this, but I have at last outlived the old passion, and can tell you of it as a thing of the past. But it makes me sad to think of the fair being, and her tragical death. She lived far south of here, near the head-waters of the Chattahoochee, in a lone cabin that was near no other habitation. She was a half-breed, but as pretty a girl as I ever saw. Her mother was an Indian squaw—her father an Englishman. He was quite an old man at the time I became acquainted with the family. His name was Vivian Rooke—that of his daughter was Leonola; the name, as you say, I uttered in my dream. Vivian Rooke was a singular old fellow, very reserved and always busy. He was constantly making things with his knife, such as wooden images, strange models, etc., and once in a while he would spend weeks and months in constructing some curious, unheard of thing, that would show wonderful powers of invention in its author. Such was the father of the girl I loved. Leonola returned my love, and we were engaged to be married, having the consent of her parents. But, one morning on repairing to the secluded home of my betrothed, I found that it had been visited by enemies. The house had been ransacked, and its inmates murdered in cold blood. Only two bodies were found. They were stripped of their clothing, and so mutilated that it was impossible to identify them. The third had evidently been cast into the river. I shall ever cherish the memory of my lost Leonola, and will never love another."

"Pshaw! I can see into your futur' better'n that," said Tom Badger. "You've outlived your old love, as you say yourself, and I'll stake my skulp a'gin' the h'ar on your upper lip that your next flame will be the daughter o' Colonel Wilde."

Philip Campbell dropped his eyes in confusion.

"You are certainly jesting," he said. "I never saw Christine Wilde but twice, and never spoke to her in my life."

"What o' that? It'll be as I say, mark my word."

"Well, it is possible that you are right, although—"

"B'ars and beavers! what's that?" suddenly cried the scout, seizing his rifle and springing to his feet.

"What's the matter?" shouted Campbell and O'Rourke in a breath, as they quickly followed his example.

Before the ranger could reply they were startled by a loud crashing sound in the underbrush near by, and then the stillness of the night was broken by a wild, piercing scream, so shrill and unearthly in its tone that the faces of the three hunters blanched as it struck upon their ears! A thrill of horror ran through every frame. They heard the sound of retreating footsteps rapidly dying away in the distance, and in another moment silence again brooded over the dark forest. The hunters were petrified with astonishment, and they looked mutely at each other for an explanation of the mystery. Philip was the first to speak.

"What was it, Tom? Did you see any thing?" he demanded, eagerly grasping the ranger's arm. The latter was standing with his rifle to his shoulder, gazing with flashing eyes in the direction of the recent sounds.

"Did I see any thing!" he echoed. "Wal, I ruther reckon I *did*. I happened to be lookin' that way while we's talkin', and I see'd sunkthin' as looked like a man raise slowly up from the ground. Then he jumped up into the air 'bout eight feet, with that awful screech you heard, and then fell sprawlin' on his back, jist as though he war shot."

"But I heard him running away."

"Shoot me ef you did," said the ranger, firmly. "It must 'a' been somebody else, 'cause I heard them footsteps while the man war standin' still, and after he fell. Jist wait hyur a second, and I'll see what it all means."

As he ceased speaking he suddenly bounded through the tall bushes, toward the spot where he had seen the strange sight, and was instantly lost to view in the darkness.

For a moment the ranger could be heard moving about through the crackling brushwood, and then he appeared, dragging some heavy object after him. Walking coolly forward, he threw the heavy object on the ground by the fire. His two companions started back with a cry of horror, as they looked down and saw that it was the *dead body of a man!*

Evidently he had not been dead long, for he had not yet grown cold nor stiff, and the warm blood was flowing from a wound in his breast. He appeared to have been a man in the

prime of life, stoutly built and finely-formed, with every appearance of activity and robust health. His hair and beard were black as an Indian's, and his face was rugged and bronzed, as if he had been reared from infancy in the open air. Heavy boots protected his feet, into the high tops of which his trousers were tucked. On the bosom of his hunting-shirt the letter D had been worked with a needle. As the scout deposited his burden at the feet of his startled companions, he quickly clasped his hands over the muzzle of his rifle and looked down on the upturned features of the corpse.

"Good God! Tom, what does this mean?" exclaimed Philip, recoiling with a shudder.

"It means that the hull thing are explaine-d," was the emphatic rejoinder. "That cuss layin' thar' is the same that I see'd leap into the air and fall back'ards, a minute ago."

"Is he dead?"

"Wal, as to that, I reckon a Creek Injun couldn't be deader after comin' in range o' my shooter. He's shot through the heart."

"*Shot!*" exclaimed Campbell, incredulously. "Surely you have taken leave of your senses. How could he have been shot within a dozen feet of us, and the report of the gun fail to reach our ears?"

The scout dropped upon his knees beside the corpse.

"When Tom Badger takes leave of his senses he'll let you know," said he, beginning to tear away the bloody clothing that covered the dead man's breast. "Jist look at that, now, and give your verdict."

He had laid bare the lifeless breast, and was pointing to a small hole directly over the heart, from which the blood was slowly oozing. The young man looked at it in astonishment.

"It certainly is a bullet-wound," he muttered.

"To be sure it are," asserted the other, "and whoever made it knows how to handle a gun." Then, rising to his feet and placing one hand on Philip's shoulder, he looked straight into the eyes of his companion and added, in a mysterious undertone: "Youngster, hain't you s'picioned nothin'? Hain't it struck you 't that little hole *are the track of the s'leer bullet?*"

Philip Campbell started back, with alarm and amazement depicted on his countenance.

"You jest. You can not be in earnest?"

"Jist examine that corpse, and see ef I ain't in 'arnest. Don't you see the letter D on his huntin'-shirt? He's one o' Dingle's outlaws, sure's shootin'."

"True, there *is* the letter D, and that is positive proof that he is one of Dingle's followers. But I did not suspect that these outlaws had come so far north, and I haven't heard of the silver bullet for nearly a year."

"Neither have I, and I wasn't s'pectin' to see the Dingles' in these parts any more'n you war. They've been circ'latin' 'mong the Creek Injuns in the south hyurtofore. Ef you never see'd one o' these silver bullets I'll show you this 'un"

As he spoke, the scout seized the inanimate body and turned it over on its face. Then, drawing his knife, he ripped open the back of the hunting-shirt, and began to cut into the cold flesh, in quest of the death-messenger. The object of his search was soon found and extracted from the body, and, after carefully wiping it on the grass, the scout held up to the view of his two friends a small piece of silver, about the size of a rifle-ball.

"Thar' it is," he said. "That's what the unknown feller shoots when he knocks over these outlaws, and how he does it without makin' any noise are ahead o' my time."

"Begorra! it's all witchery to me," broke forth Arran O'Rourke, who had been staring in silent wonder at the dead man until this juncture. "What does all this mane, I don't know? Who is that corpus, and who kilt him?"

"Wal, Irish, bein' you hain't lived in this kentry long 'nough to know any thing about this, I'll try and throw a light on your mind. For a long time thar's been a band o' plunderin' cut-throats roamin' round through Georgia and Alabama, and the southern part o' this State, led by a cuss named Dingle. For about two years somebody's been shootin' these varmints one by one, at long intervals. Nobody knows who this pason is, 'cause he never shows hisself, but, whoever he may be, he never shoots any thing but *silver bullets*. Another queer thing is, his gun never makes a noise when it goes off. Now, thar's skeereely anybody in these parts but what have heard tell o' the Secret Slayer, but thar's mighty few that believes a word o' the story concernin' him. Thar' ain't more'n

two or three fellers, countin' myself, that actshully knows the story are true, and in course the people ain't goin' to credit sich a tall yarn as that, 'less they see the hull thing tharselfes. S'pose *you* believe it, though, for hyur's proof that is proof. This is the second time I've seen the work o' the silent weepin'."

Tom Badger paused, and put the small piece of silver in a pocket beneath his hunting-shirt.

"Did ye niver see the gintleman that pops 'em over?" inquired O'Rourke, deeply interested.

"No one ever see'd him. I half believe it's a sperit that does it. Whether he's sperit or human he seems bent on rid-din' the world of Dingle's outlaws, and I hope he'll succeed. I'm sum'at taken aback to see 'em so fur north as this, and it's the private opinion o' this beaver 'ut we'd better cut sticks for Smith's P'int as soon as we can put our pegs in motion. Ev'rybody knows the Dingles are connected with the Injuns, and ef this skunk was sneakin' around our camp you may bet high thar's red-skins not fur away. We can't stay yur till mornin', that's said. The Injuns have already begun thar work, and the best thing we can do are to put for the settlement, and give in our report."

"But what shall we do with this corpse?"

"Let it lay thar and rot. The brute don't deserve buryin' even ef we had time to do it. Come; let's be off. Needn't put out the fire; 'twon't hurt nothin'."

The ranger's proposition was not objected to; in fact, he only had to speak to be obeyed on all occasions. Grasping their guns they declared themselves ready to follow him, and, with a parting glance at the corpse of the desperado, the three Linters plunged into the gloomy forest, and were off at a rapid gait in the direction of Smith's Point.

CHAPTER II

A CRY OF DISTRESS.

At an early hour on the following day, three men were guiding an Indian canoe down the Cumberland river. They were our friends, Tom Badger, Philip Campbell and Arran O'Rourke.

It was a clear, calm morning. The sun was an hour high, and shone down through a pure atmosphere, but the dense forest that came down to the water's edge on each side of the river, cast long shadows over the bosom of the stream, and made the way of the voyagers shady and cool. The wood's recesses echoed with the warbling lays of thousands of birds, and the merry fish darted hither and thither through the water, frequently leaping above the surface, and flashing like burnished medleys of silver and gold when the sunlight struck them.

The canoe floated silently along with the current. Philip Campbell sat in the stern, dallying with the paddle and doing little else besides keeping the craft in the middle of the stream. Tom Badger occupied the bow, where, in a half-kneeling, half-stooping posture, he kept up an indefatigable look-out for "sign," his trusty rifle lying across the hollow of his left arm, while his right hand clutched the hammer, and his keen, restless orbs scanning alternately the thickly-wooded shores. Arran O'Rourke sat between the two, his gun beside him and his cap hanging on his knee as he waited to take his turn at the paddle.

The canoe was a much larger one than was necessary for the conveyance of three men ; in fact, it was fully capable of carrying half a dozen persons in addition to the trio that now occupied it. Their choice of this was not without a cause, and requires a brief explanation.

Several miles down the river lived one Colonel Wilde, an old soldier, as his title signifies. He was somewhat odd in his ways, but warm-hearted, generous to a fault, and brave as

the bravest. A short time prior to the period of which we write, the hand of death had deprived him of the partner of his earthly joys and griefs, leaving to his care an only child, an "airy, fairy" little maiden, named Christine. The death of his wife seemed to have given the colonel a taste for solitude, and, having retired from active service, he erected a house far from any other habitation, where, with no other companions than his daughter and an old negro cook, he had lived ever since. Now that the Indian troubles were breaking out along the frontier, threatening the immediate destruction of those whites who were separated from the main bodies, the chivalrous commandant at Smith's Point had sent these three trustworthy men to escort Colonel Wilde and daughter to the settlement, where they could remain under the protection of its garrison till the storm was over. This was why the hunters were descending the river on the morning after the night of their adventure, and why they had chosen a boat of such ample dimensions.

Tom Badger kept his position in the bow, while Philip and the Irishman took turns at the paddle—the use of more than one paddle being deemed superfluous in riding with the current. The measured dip of the ashen blade was so soft that it could not have been heard a dozen feet away, and scarcely a word was spoken as they glided steadily and stealthily onward. Mile after mile was passed in comparative silence, Badger never once leaving his position, but discharging his duty with untiring patience, his eyes burning like watch-fires beneath their shaggy brows, as they constantly swept the shores and penetrated the margin of the thick woods on either hand.

It was near the hour of noon when the ranger turned his head half around and said :

"This is the place, youngster. We've gone far enough. Run into shore ; yonder's the place to land."

Philip, who held the oar, sunk the entire length of its blade into the water, giving it a sweep that swung the canoe around and sent it flying with the speed of a swallow toward the left bank of the river.

In another moment they were lying close up under the bank.

"You stay hyur and guard the boat," said the ranger, addressing both of his companions, "while I go after Colonel Wilde and his family. I'll have 'em yur in the twinklia' of a pig's eye onless they've already been burnt out by the heathen. Let's see; thar's three of 'em, countin' the old nigger woman—and I reckon she'll amount to a good deal when she sets her fat carcass in the canoe. Keep your meat-trap closed while I'm gone, 'cause I'm kinder of the opinion that we've been follered!"

After a few more directions, hastily given, Tom Badger stepped out on land. Here he paused for a moment and glanced suspiciously around, and then, dropping his head, he glided away in the direction of Colonel Wilde's dwelling.

"I wonder how far is the colonel's shanty from here?" muttered O'Rourke, when the bushes had closed behind the crouching form of the hunter.

"A very short distance," replied our hero, softly.

"Thin, Badger 'll be back soon, won't he?"

"'Sh!—I suppose so. Don't speak so loudly; you'll have the Indians upon us if you're not more careful."

The warning was heeded, and the conversation was continued in softer tones. We may here say that Arran O'Rourke had not been long on the frontier, and consequently was not as well versed in Indian warfare as his two friends.

Several minutes went by. The twain were sitting silently in the canoe, conversing in scarcely audible whispers, when all of a sudden a loud, prolonged scream burst upon their ears, so startling and unexpected to them that both men sprung to their feet involuntarily! The scream was followed by another, and still another, the clear, feminine tones echoing pitifully through the forest arches, and dying away with a wail and a sob. Then the coarse voice of a man was heard, laughing at and mocking the author of the distressful cries!

The two men looked at each other inquiringly.

"What the divil does it all mane?" exclaimed O'Rourke.

"I can not guess," replied Philip, shaking his head.

"Bedad, it's me belafe that something's the matter?" said the Irishman, with the air of a man making a revelation.

"That is very evident," replied Philip. "There is plainly something the matter, but the question is— Hark!"

They listened again. That voice, which was evidently a female's, had ceased its screaming, and now seemed pouring forth an earnest entreaty to somebody, while the other voice broke in upon it with a storm of curses and imprecations.

"Howly Vargin! It must be a gurril in distress, I don't know?"

"Yes, yes; beyond a doubt. It is a girl in distress, as sure as I live, and I am going to see what it means. Stay here, Arran, till I return. I shan't be gone long."

"Stop! I'll go wid ye," declared O'Rourke.

"No, you must not. It will not do for both of us to leave the boat. You had better stay here; I shall be back soon."

Before the Irishman could further object, Campbell had sprung out of the boat and was on the grassy bank.

Without losing a moment the young man darted away through the thick underwood, with far less caution than haste. He knew there was a female in trouble near by, and he knew of but one female that lived in this vicinity. His cheeks and forehead flushed crimson as he thought of that one, and reflected that it might lay in his power to rescue her from trouble.

In his haste he did not calculate the distance, but only made sure that he was going in the right direction, and dashed through brush and brier at the top of his speed. He had taken no more than twenty long bounds after leaving the river, when he suddenly burst upon a scene that caused him to halt very abruptly, and recoil with astonishment.

He found himself on the edge of a small glade. In the very center of this glade his flashing eyes alighted upon two human figures—a young girl struggling frantically in the rude embrace of a man!

The former he recognized at first sight. A closer look at the latter showed him that the girl's tormentor was one of Dingle's outlaws! The initial letter could be plainly seen on his breast, and he was dressed precisely like the wretch whose corpse had been examined by the hunters on the preceding night, except that he wore a broad-brimmed, cone-shaped hat, with a long black feather. The demon of his nature was reflected in every lineament of his dark face, and to add to his savage appearance, a fierce-looking mustache encompassed his mouth, and drooped below his chin.

He held the struggling maiden in a close embrace, and was slowly dragging her away from the spot, laughing and swearing by turns at her efforts to escape.

Philip Campbell took in all at a glance. His approach had not been noticed, noisy as it was. His mind was made up on the instant, and he was never slow in acting. Quick as thought he threw up his rifle and took aim at the desperado. There was a flash and a report; the man's right arm fell to his side, limp and useless, shattered by the bullet from the unerring gun! Instantly removing his grasp from the girl, the ruffian gave vent to a hoarse roar of mingled pain and rage, and bounded away like a hunted deer, without stopping to see who had shot him!

The girl, finding herself free, looked about to see who it was that had rescued her.

Our hero, observing that there was no help for it, stepped forward and bowed low before the little beauty, coloring up like a bashful school-boy as he did so.

Poor Philip! He had seen Christine Wilde before, and had been struck by her innocent loveliness, but he thought she had never looked so marvelously sweet as now. She was small of stature, but perfect in form, with movements as airy and graceful as those of an Houri, and her hair, gold-hued and silky, fell in a gleaming profusion of ripples and ringlets over a pair of faultless shoulders. Her cheeks were softly radiant with the delicate tint of the sea-shell; her lips at repose resembled the bow of Love; and her eyes, beautiful mirrors of the soul, were as blue as the mountain daisy, and full of changing lights. Just now, as she looked up with a thrill that was half joy, half fear, and saw the handsome young man who had saved her, her face at once became as smiling and tearful as an April sky.

Holding out her hand, she said:

"Is this Mr. Campbell?"

"At your service, Miss Wilde," he replied, in no little confusion, as he took the small dimpled hand in his. "This meeting is a pleasure. I assure you, and I am happy to have had an opportunity of serving you, even though the service rendered was so slight."

"Indeed, sir, it was not slight," cried the girl, earnestly

"I believe you have saved my life, and oh ! I thank you so very, very much. I shall never forget you."

"No, no ; I don't deserve this," said Philip, his heart throbbing wildly with the joy her last words had given him. "Indeed, I do not deserve your thanks. I can not believe that fellow could have had the heart to harm so fair a creature—"

He cut the sentence short. He had stumbled upon it almost unconsciously, but the deepening color on the maiden's cheeks brought him to his senses.

"You give him credit for more mercy than he possesses," said she, as if she had not noticed his compliment, nor its interruption. Perhaps you don't know that he is one of those outlaws—"

"Yes, I do," interrupted Philip. I knew from the first that he was one of those murdering demons called the Dingles."

"Nay, he is Dingle himself !"

"What ! the leader of the bandits ?"

"Yes."

"How know you that, if I may ask ?"

"He told me so, while he was trying to carry me away. I had been walking by the river-side, as I frequently do, and had started homeward when the man confronted me. I saw by the letter on his breast that he was one of those bandits, but did not suspect that he was the leader till he informed me. He said I should be his, and that he was going to carry me far away from here. I screamed for help, and you came. Oh, sir, words can not tell my gratitude."

"Don't speak of it," returned Philip.

Christine Wilde looked up into the young man's eyes, her own swimming in tears and beaming with unutterable gratitude.

"I can not help it, sir," she said. "You are very kind, and brave. You must have been near by, to hear my cries and come so quickly," she added.

"Yes," he replied ; "I was sitting in a canoe with a friend, and, being close to shore, I jumped out when I heard your cries. But let that pass. It will surprise you, Miss Wilde, when I tell you that Tom Badger and myself, together with a

man named O'Rourke, are here for the purpose of taking you and your father up the river to Smith's Point."

The blue eyes opened in surprise.

"Why, sir, what is the matter? Why do you wish to take us to Smith's Point?"

"Can't you guess? Don't you know that there are Indians wherever Dingle's outlaws rove?"

"You mean, then, that the Indians are rising against the whites?" asked the girl, growing alarmed.

"I mean that the woods are full of them, and there are many in this vicinity! They are all round your home at this moment, and probably are only waiting for night to attack you!"

"Merciful heaven! what shall we do?" Christine Wilde clasped her hands and turned pale, as she made the inquiry.

"Pardon me; I didn't mean to frighten you," Philip hastened to say. "It may not be as bad as I have said. The presence of that bandit, Dingle, in this neighborhood, has impressed upon my mind an apprehension that your house has not escaped the eyes of the savages; but I may be wrong. At any rate they will be apt to wait until night before offering you harm, and you know we are going to take you away before that time?"

"Yes, yes; but will it not be by the working of a miracle if we reach the fort in safety?"

"I think not. We were not disturbed on our way here."

But even as he spoke Philip Campbell was dreading the up-river journey. It could not now be hoped that they would not be seen, and how could it be expected that blood-thirsty Indians on the war-path would let so small a party go unmolested? He looked at the lovely creature before him with a tender, wistful gaze, and was only reminded of his boldness by the drooping of her eyelids. Vexed with himself, he began to load his rifle in silence.

"You said Tom Badger came with you—where is he now?" asked Christine Wilde, after a pause.

"He has gone to the house after you and your father. He left O'Rourke and me to guard the boat."

"If that is the case I must hurry home," said the girl quickly. "Papa will not leave the house until I return."

She started away, but Philip detained her.

"You must not go alone," he said. "I am sure we are watched, and you would not be permitted to go peaceably home. Dingle himself can not be far away, since the wound I gave him will only serve to make him furious. Come with me to the river, where I left my friend. I will place you under his protection, and then go myself after the others. Your father will come without delay when assured of your safety. Do you agree to this plan?"

"I do," was the calm reply.

CHAPTER III.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

TOGETHER Philip Campbell and Christine Wilde proceeded to the river. The former thought it a convenient and comparatively safe plan to leave the girl in charge of Arran O'Rourke, while he should hasten to apprise those at the house of her whereabouts, and thus begin the return voyage without further delay.

But, no sooner had they reached the bank of the river, than Philip stopped suddenly and grasped the maiden's wrist. They had come in sight of the canoe. It was lying on the water just as the young man had left it a few minutes before, but what was his surprise when he saw that it was empty! Arran O'Rourke was nowhere to be seen!

At this point the bank sloped gradually to the water's edge, and, although the couple were several yards distant from the canoe, yet they had a good view of it, inside and out. The paddles were lying in the stern; the prow rested on the sand, and its general appearance indicated that it had been voluntarily deserted. Campbell could hardly believe the Irishman capable of committing so imprudent an act, but, look in whatever direction he would, not a soul was to be seen.

All at once he gave a slight start, and his fingers closed tightly around the wrist of his fair companion. She looked

up and saw that he was gazing fixedly at the boat. Unable to descry any thing alarming in that direction herself, she was about to ask him what he saw, when he stooped down and whispered hurriedly to her :

“Down, Christine ! Move back a step or two, and lie close to the ground—quick !”

Christine obeyed promptly, without asking the cause of the command. She well understood that he had sufficient reasons for giving it, though they were any thing but evident to her.

Philip threw himself on the ground, still keeping his gaze fastened on the spot where the canoe lay. That which had attracted his attention would not have been noticed by one less experienced in wood-craft. It was nothing more nor less than some very small ripples in the water, coming out from behind the little vessel ! Of course he would not have given these a second look had he thought they were caused by the vessel itself, but he knew they were *not*, and yet was equally positive that they were caused by *something*. They were ripples such as are caused by a solid body being held motionless in the current, forcing the water to part, as it were, and pass round on separate sides. These, however, being near the shore where the water flowed gently, were small and scarcely discernible, but they were *there*, and Philip Campbell arrived at the conclusion that there was somebody behind the boat !

What could it be but a human being ? He was satisfied that it was nothing else. A log, or uprooted stump could hardly have lodged there. But who was it ? Surely not Arran O'Rourke, unless that worthy was playing a joke on him in this way. Perhaps it was an Indian, who had killed O'Rourke, and was thus lying in wait for the companions of his victim ? Philip shuddered at the thought, but was forced to acknowledge that it was the most probable explanation he could give.

While such thoughts were darting through his mind, he distinctly saw the tip of a white feather rise about an inch above the gunwale of the boat. If he had been satisfied before that the invisible person was an Indian, there was not the shadow of a doubt in his mind now. Being certain that it was an enemy he no longer remained idle. Thrusting his gun slowly forward, he drew back the hammer and braced the butt

against his shoulder, running his eye along the polished barrel. He took deliberate aim, so that the ball would pass over the nearest gunwale, and go through the opposite side of the craft, just below the visible portion of the white plume. The canoe was made entirely of bark, so a rifle-ball could pass through it almost as easily as through paper.

Philip was about to pull the trigger when he was checked by a low, penetrating voice, speaking from a dense patch of bushes close to his elbow.

“Whist, Campbell; there’s a rid-skin down there, sure.”

He knew it was the Irishman who spoke, and he was scarcely less surprised than delighted by this conclusive evidence that his jovial friend was yet alive. He did not turn his head, however, but merely replied:

“I know it, Arran; I am going to shoot the dog.”

The words were still in his mouth when the sharp crack of his rifle told plainly that he was in earnest. The canoe became violently agitated—there was a smothered, gurgling yell—a terrible floun lering in the water—and the ripples were not only enlarged, but changed to a crimson hue! Next moment the hand of an Indian was thrust above the surface a few feet below the canoe, and instantly withdrawn again as the luckless wretch drifted away into eternity.

Our hero sprung to his feet with sparkling eyes, as he noticed the result of his shot.

He was on the point of saying something to O’Rourke, when a low, suppressed cry behind him froze the words in his mouth. He whirled round with the quickness of lightning, and saw a coarse, brutal-looking man rapidly dragging Christine Wilde away from the spot! The fellow was one of Dingle’s outlaws, and as savage-looking a white man as was ever seen. One of his brawny hands clutched the girl’s arm, and the other was placed over her mouth to stifle her screams.

“Heavens and earth! what will happen next?” shouted Philip, fiercely. “Come on, O’Rourke! we’re beset with enemies!”

Then, clubbing his rifle, he leaped forward to rescue the girl a second time. With a few agile springs he overtook them. Whirling his gun around his head, he was about to

dealt the villain a killing blow, when he suddenly paused, lowered his weapon and stood aghast! It was no wonder at all that he did this. Before he could strike, the bandit had released the girl, thrown up his arms and tumbled backwards to the ground, without a cry or a groan. He was dead—a small hole in his temple showed that he was shot through the brain, and yet no report had disturbed the stillness.

"'Tis the *silver bullet*," muttered Philip, feeling a peculiar awe as he looked down upon the work of that silent avenger.

But his pause was only momentary. Knowing that no time should be wasted in idleness, he quickly suspended his empty gun across his back and said, hurriedly, to the girl:

"Christine, there are enemies on all sides of us. Our only chance of escape is in running for life, and I shall have to carry you."

He gave her no time to reply, but lifted her in his arms as he would a child, and dashed away with the speed of an antelope in the direction of Colonel Wilde's dwelling, crying out to Arran O'Rourke to follow him. But he had scarcely started when a dozen rifles flamed from the forest behind him, and as many bullets whistled through the air in close proximity to his person. He did not abate his speed, but glanced down to see if Christine was injured. She was not, and holding her so that his own body would shield her from the missiles of the enemy, he fairly flew over the ground with the hope of saving her life. Ear-splitting whoops now filled the air, as the Indians gave chase, and Campbell knew well that two lives depended on the swiftness of his movements.

Strength and fleetness of foot are among the requisite acquirements of a hunter. Philip Campbell possessed both of these, and the savages were struck with admiration as they saw how trifling the weight of the girl seemed to him. But they knew it could not last long. Though her weight was so trifling to him now, they understood that it would soon begin to tell on the wonderful rate at which he was going. Philip thought of this, too, and he strained every muscle to its utmost tension in a desperate endeavor to outstrip his athletic

pursuers. The wild yells in his rear only spurred him on, and, like a meteor darting through the trees, he flashed over stones and fallen trees at the imminent danger of being precipitated to the ground. Christine lay passive in his arms, with one of her own plump, white arms twined around his neck, and her pretty head nestled on his shoulder. He felt a sort of wild pleasure in thus risking his life for her, feeling sure, as he did, that he could have evaded his pursuers with comparative ease but for this beautiful encumbrance.

Such a race was necessarily short. Even had Colonel Wilde's cabin been further away it must have ended almost as speedily as it did, since Philip could not have hoped to hold his distance much longer against such disadvantages. As he burst into the wide clearing, in the center of which stood the house he was attempting to reach, he shouted aloud to the inmates to let him in.

He saw the door open, and Tom Badger appear in the entrance. The Indians were close in his rear, pressing him hard, but he was determined to reach the goal before them, or die defending the lovely being he was trying to save. He bent his energies to the task, and succeeded. A few long leaps and he bounded over the threshold with his precious burden, and the old ranger just had time to slam the door to, when the foremost savages hurled themselves against it with such violence that the building was shaken from top to bottom.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BESIEGED CABIN

PHILIP, flushed and panting, quickly deposited the half-fainting girl in the arms of her anxious father, and then assisted the ranger in fastening the door.

"Shoot me, boy, you've had a tough race," said the latter. "Who'd 'a' thought you'd been set onto by the infarnal imp afore I could git back?" But how'd you find the gal, and whar' in creation did you leave *Irix*?"

"I can not tell you where O'Rourke is," was the reply "I called to him to follow me when I started, but I haven't seen nor heard him since. Wait till I recover my breath, and I'll tell you all."

Colonel Wilde, a slim, wiry old man, with iron-gray hair and beard, came forward to shake the hand of the gallant youth, and to praise and thank him for the daring feat he had accomplished. The colonel was trembling with joy at the safe return of his daughter, for, since Tom Badger had told him the forest was full of Indians, his mind had been a prey to harassing fears regarding her. She had left the house two hours before, to walk down by the river, and, as she was absent longer than usual on this occasion, thus almost confirming his fears, the fond father was on the eve of sallying forth in search of her, when Campbell came dashing in with the object of his anxiety, alive and well.

Old Dinah, the black cook, now came in from the kitchen, her sleeves rolled up, and her ebony face shining with heat and excitement. She caught Christine in her big, fat arms, crying, laughing and scolding in the same breath.

"Wha' for you done run away, honey?" she exclaimed. 'Hain't you got no more suspect for our feelin's dan to poke your blessed head right in 'mongst dem yar red debils? I declar' I don't hab a minute's peace o' my life for runnin' after you, an' bodderin' my old brain to keep you out o' trouble. Yer fader an' me's been pestered to de'f eber since you gone an' went away, an' you know I tole you de Injuns would git you if you went down to de ribber—"

"There, Dinah; that will do," said Christine, with a faint smile. "You know you told me to take a walk, and to go to Guinea if I wanted to, so I kept out of your way. You did not suspect, any more than I did, that there were Indians near. Don't scold, Dinah."

"Dar, bress yer little gizzard, you knows I wouldn't scold you. Wha' makes you say dat, when I never opened my mouf to scold you sence de day you climbed to de top o' de ole cottonwood an' git down on de roof o' de house? Law, missa, I's glad you's safe, but de Lor' knows you looks weak enough. Come right 'long in de kitchen, now, an' take a big swaller o' dat sassafrac tea."

Christine suffered herself to be led into the kitchen by the old cook, where she took a little of the tea to steady her nerves.

Although the Indians, fearing a volley from the inmates of the house, had immediately scattered to cover on finding entrance impossible, the three men lost no time in securing every door and window of the lower story. It was understood by all that the savages, in their hasty retreat, had gone only far enough to be out of sight, and that they were lying in concealment around the edge of the clearing. It was plain that the whites were besieged by a large number of the enemy; as Tom Badger quaintly remarked, "they war in for it, sure as shootin'," and the question was, how long were they to be cooped up there, so far away from their friends?

When Philip had recounted all that had taken place at the river, except his wounding of Dingle, the bandit, which Christine supplied very graphically, they knew they had white as well as red foes to deal with. Much wonder was created when he told of the death of the outlaw by the silver bullet, and, to confirm the words of his friend, Tom Badger related their experience of the preceding night, assuring the colonel that the unknown individual who used those silver bullets was really in that vicinity, and, to prove his statement, exhibited the ball he had taken from the corpse. Colonel Wilde, like nearly everybody who merely heard it as a rumor, had hitherto placed no faith in the curious legend, but now, hearing it from the lips of those who had actually seen the work of the mysterious slayer, and having it proved to him by an exhibition of the veritable silver bullet, his skepticism was not so marked as before.

No little grief was felt for the missing Irishman. It was the general belief that he had been killed while attempting to follow Campbell, though the latter suggested that he might have remained hid in the bushes, and escaped detection. That he was dead or a captive there was little doubt existing, and it had to be admitted that the former was more likely his fate. Aside from their grief, they felt that they could ill afford to lose the services of the fearless fellow at this critical time, inasmuch as he commonly did the work of two men when fighting was the order of the hour.

Knowing that to leave the cabin at present would be to hasten their death, the inmates applied themselves to the task of making their means of defense as complete as possible, and keeping a bright look-out for Indians. The backwoods residence of Colonel Wilde was of considerable size for the place and period. With two ample rooms below stairs and two above, it would have held many more defenders than now occupied it, but the manner in which it was built showed it would be easy for the few defenders it did possess to hold out for some length of time against the assailants. If they could prevent the savages from setting fire to the building during the coming night, they believed they could hold their position until the morrow, at least. But, if that Indian custom of discharging burning arrows at the house should be resorted to, they realized that their chances for life would be exceedingly few. Repel the foe as often as they might, however, it would seem that they must succumb sooner or later, for, even if fire should fail to overcome them, there could certainly be no such thing as failure in starvation !

It was long after noon. The hours dragged slowly by, and a most impressive silence reigned outside and in. Everybody within the cabin kept up a vigilant watch—even Christine and Dinah occupied a place where they could see out without fear of discovery. Nobody went up stairs, as the second story afforded no such means of watching as the first, and although one of the upper windows was open, according to Dinah's report, it was not deemed necessary to close it before evening.

"A pretty scrape we're in," remarked Colonel Wilde, when the afternoon was well advanced.

"Wal, it are," answered Tom Badger, from his post ; "and how we shall ever git out of it are a long ways ahead o' my time. 'Thar's a hull raft o' the imps watchin' this lodge, and I opine they'll do wuss nor that afore mornin' ef we don't manage to give 'em the slip, and 'tain't likely as we'll do that. One of our number has already passed in his checks, and we'll be powerful lucky ef the rest of us don't foller him."

As may be conjectured, the scout did not utter these words so that any besides the person addressed could hear them. In the presence of the females he was invariably cheerful, and spoke as though escape from the cabin was not impossible.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Colonel Wilde, looking up with an air of impatience. "I've been standing here for three full hours, and haven't seen the sign of an Indian. Candidly, Badger, I don't think there is one within a mile of us."

"Don't fool yourself," quietly admonished the ranger.

"Have you seen any?"

"Wal, not exactly, but 'tain't been three shakes since I saw the skulp-lock of one of the varmints out thar in the woods. It was gone 'fore I could draw bead on him, but that was enough to satisfy this beaver that the imps war still around. Ef you want it proved to you, jist wait till night, an' ef—"

Tom Badger was standing by a loop-hole near the front door, and through it had been keeping a strict watch while he was talking. As he left off speaking so suddenly, his glittering eyes told that something had come under their observation which made him forget every thing else for the present. Raising his rifle he cautiously pushed the muzzle through the loop-hole, and took quick aim at something outside. There was a jarring explosion, and the ranger drew in his smoking gun and leisurely began to reload it.

"What is it, Badger? What have you shot?" asked Philip and the colonel, running to the ranger's post of duty.

"Nothin' only an Injun," was the brief response.

They looked out, and saw that it was indeed an Indian, lying prone upon the ground several yards away. He was as motionless as a log, and evidently dead, though one hand still clutched a ramrod to which was attached a white feather.

"The cuss war' comin' to'ards the house," said the scout, "holdin' up that white feather on his rammer, as ef he wanted to hold a parley with us. Reckon he's parleyin' with the Old Boy 'bout now."

"What!" Colonel Wilde looked at him in astonishment. "Do you mean to say you shot him while he was asking for a parley?"

"Jist that, and nothin' less."

"Oh, Tom, how could you?" said a sweet, reproachful voice at his side, as Christine stole a shuddering glance at the dead savage.

The scout patted her cheek, with one of his peculiarly pleasant smiles, as he replied:

"Thar', thar', little 'un ; whar's the use o' talkin' ? You know Tom Badger couldn't 'a' done that ef it hadn't been for your own good. The rule I work by on sich 'casions as this is, to shoot every cussed red that shows enough of his neck 'le to shoot at. By doin' that we lessen the number of our enemies, and make our chances of escape a heap better. Now that varmint was about to ask us to surrender, and you know we ain't goin' to do that, 'cause it 'ud be throwin' our lives away without any cause whatsoever. 'Twon't do no good to parley with 'em."

"But you have maddened them by this act," said Colone. Wilde, "and they will be ten times more determined to taste our blood. Listen ! I hear them yelling now."

"Let 'em yell—'tain't going to bring the feller to life. Does me good to rile the imps once in a while, 'specially when they think they're goin' to have things all their own way. Knockin' that imp over will do no harm. Reds is reds, wherever they be, and our fate can't be no harder for givin' that un' his last sickness. Nothin' will be done 'fore night, and then, ef wust comes to wust, thar'll be nothin' left for us to do but to make a dash fur it."

The scout had "said his say," and immediately became reticent, asserting that it was no time for idle talk. The others took the hint and resumed their posts, and the silent, weary watch was continued.

The long afternoon wore away, and not another Indian was seen by those within the cabin. The hours seemed unusually long to all, and a general feeling of restless impatience showed itself in their manners, although there was not one among them who did not dread the coming of night. Minah, frightened half out of her wits, could with difficulty be restrained from giving vent to her feelings in her usual extravagant way, whenever reminded of the awful peril that hung over them. "She would like to know," she said, "what for dey want her to keep still, when the Injuns knowed dey was dar anyway ?" Badger explained to her that they intended making an effort to escape in the night, and, if they should be noisy while they remained there, the silence that would ensue after their departure would create suspicion among the redskins, and probably cause their destruction. Badger had

yet formed no definite plan by which to outwit the assailants, but it could be seen that his mind was continually at work.

As evening approached, the time passed quickly, and even pleasantly, to Philip Campbell, for Christine Wilde came and stood beside him, and they entered into conversation. These were delightful moments to our hero, and he felt that he could never regret endangering his own life by coming here to save hers. His earnest, ardent tones brought the blushes to her cheeks, and when her soft, blue eyes met his glowing black ones, each seemed reading the heart of the other. When she at last left him he sighed, and muttered:

"Perhaps Badger isn't so bad a prophet, after all. I—I am nearly in love with her already. Poor Leonola! Had not death robbed me of her she would have been my wife now."

The sun was sinking in the west when Colonel Wilde suggested that they have supper. Because they were besieged by Indians was no reason at all why they should neglect the inner man, said the colonel, and, for his part, he would not do it. No one objected, and so the colored cook was dispatched to the kitchen to prepare a cold meal. It was not deemed advisable, nor necessary, to kindle a fire for its preparation, since there was a plentiful supply of provisions already cooked.

The table, with its clean, white cloth, was set in the front room, and the negro woman soon had it covered with cold victuals. Tom Badger said there was no need of any one standing guard while the rest were eating, and so he and the colonel, and Philip, and Christine, all seated themselves around the table to partake of the plain, but bountiful, meal. The old sold soldier, as was his custom, solemnly asked the blessing, and added a short, fervent prayer that the little party there congregated would be shown the divine mercy of Him who holdeth our lives in the hollow of His hand, and that they would be guided safely out of the appalling danger that hung over them, even as the Israelites were guided out of the land of their bondage.

Dinah was then sent above stairs to close the windows, as it would soon be dark, and the ranger told her it would do no harm to glance out occasionally while they were eating.

since the scoundrels outside might be aware that they were off their guard.

Not one of those gathered round the loaded board, except, perhaps, the ranger, had the least relish for the food before them, though all feigned hunger. Christine was calm, but very pale, and every mouthful seemed to choke her ; but she knew the eyes of her anxious father were upon her, and she tried hard to do justice to the edibles. Philip noticed her distress, and, to relieve her, very skillfully drew her into conversation, speaking so lightly and pleasantly himself, that the color soon stole back to its place, and faint smiles played about her rosy lips. In his remarks he would intimate, apparently without design, that their situation was not nearly so terrible as it seemed, but the girl, although her drooping spirits were partly revived, had lived too long among Indians to be deceived with regard to their situation.

They were in the midst of their repast when they were interrupted by a series of terrified screams from Dinah, as that inestimable lady came bounding down the stairs like a tub, and burst into their presence wild with fright. The poor woman was utterly beside herself, and her master was compelled to shake her violently, and order her peremptorily to cease her noise, before her cries were in the least abated.

When quiet was restored, and Dinah was once more in the full possession of her senses, she was asked what it was that had frightened her so ? With chattering teeth she told them that she had been closing every aperture in the second story, in obedience to orders, when, on approaching one of the rear windows, she had plainly seen a man among the branches of the large cottonwood tree that stood near the house. He was a white man, she said, and was crawling along one of the largest limbs of the tree, straight toward the window she had gone there to close.

"Good heaven !" ejaculated the colonel, "I had thought nothing was forgotten, but that tree has not been in my mind since the Indians surrounded us. It stands in the rear of the house, and one of its limbs reaches almost to a window that has been open the entire afternoon. The house may be easily entered by means of it. Are you sure it was a white man you saw, Dinah ?"

"Yes, sah; sartin suah," replied the trembling cook.

"Was he one of Dingle's men?"

"S'pect he one o' de debbil's men, massa. 'Pon my honor, he was de ugliest, meanest-lookin' feller I eber sot eyes on, in all my born days. I know he's gool fur nothin' but to murder peaceable folks, an' I'll bet dat 'ar stockin' o' tobaccor hangin' yander dat he'll massakree ebery mudder's son ob us. I's gwine to git under de bed—dat's what I's gwine to do."

"Stop, Dinah," said the colonel, seizing her as she was starting away. "Don't be a fool. As you value your life—"

"*Hark!*" cried Christine, laying her hand on her father's arm.

"What is it, Christy?"

"'Sh!—listen—don't you hear?"

Rising full and clear on the still evening air, came the flute-like notes of somebody whistling that ever-popular tune, Yankee Doodle! It was too distinct to be mistaken, the whistler evidently caring little who heard him, or whether he was heard at all or not. They could not tell whence the music came; it seemed in the air above them, and echoed on every side.

"What does that mean?" asked the colonel, with a puzzled look.

"Hush!—listen!" interposed Philip. "I think I heard a footstep overhead— Ah!"

They all heard it now. It was a heavy, dragging footstep, as of somebody in coarse boots walking leisurely about over the floor above them! The lively strains of Yankee Doodle were kept up without intermission, and it was now quite obvious that they issued from the lips of the person in the second story.

"Who can it be?" said Philip, appealing to Tom Badger.

"Dunno," was the reply, "but whoever he are he must be crazier than a loon."

Then the ranger stepped forward to the foot of the stairs and stood looking up, with his gun to his shoulder ready to be fired at the first appearance of an enemy.

He had not stood thus a minute when the cloud lifted

from his brow, his gun dropped to the floor, and he took a step backward as if from surprise. Then his features relaxed into a broad grin, and clapping his hands upon his sides he gave vent to a silent but hearty laugh. His mirth was shared by the rest of the party when they saw a man coming down the stairs, with his cap on the back of his head, his hands sunk deep into his pockets, and a serio-comic expression on his face. For the intruder was no other than the missing man, *Arran O'Rourke*!

The Irishman paused in their midst, and looked around on the faces of all present, but spoke not a word until he had finished the tune he was whistling.

CHAPTER V.

THE NARROW ROAD TO SAFETY.

THERE was much rejoicing at the re-appearance of Arran O'Rourke, whom all had supposed dead. He was given a seat at the table, and numerous inquiries were put to him, as to how he had escaped from the Indians and had succeeded in reaching the cabin undisturbed. But O'Rourke held his tongue until they ceased questioning him, and then looking up, he told them that if they were done talking he would proceed to explain how he came to be there.

"Whin Campbell left the river," said he, and called to me to follow him, I found I couldn't do it widout l'apin' over the heads iv the rid-skins. They kem out of a thicket right fur-ninst me, sure, like a flock iv pa'tridges, and put off after Campbell and the girrul. Divil a wan iv 'em see'd me, and so I kept me physiognomy under kiver till they were gone. Thin I commenced scoutin' a trifle, and kep gittin' nearer and nearer to the shanty till I found meself right out there be the edge iv the cl'arin'. Mither iv Moses! w'u'd ye b'l'ave Patrick O'Rourke's b'y, from Ireland, whin he tells ye the rid nagurs are on ivery side iv the house? That they be, and it's hard to tell how I managed to climb that tree, and crawl

through the windy, widout bein' shot at; but I did it, and here I am."

"Do you not know that you are worse off now than when you were on the outside?" asked Philip, with a smile.

"Pnat care I? I didn't come in here to better me own condition, but yers—av ye need me services?"

"Well said, Irish—well said," interposed Tom Badger, approvingly. "I ain't sartin that we'll need your services, but ef we do, it's my opine you'll prove yourself a hull team. Thar's game in you, Irish, and you're a fust-rate chap to have around when the fightin' comes. But, look hyur," he added, "did you shut that winder after comin' in?"

"Yis, sur," answered O'Rourke; "I shet it so tight that an Injun couldn't be afther gittin' in, at all."

"That's sufficient. We're all hyur now like a lot o' rats in a trap, and the rub lays in gettin' out."

By this time it was growing dark in the house. Gloomy night was stealing on apace, promising nothing but inconceivable horrors, and there was more than one pallid face in the little group cooped up within the walls of the building.

Silence now fell upon every tongue. All were watching Tom Badger, who stood in the center of the room as still as a carved image, leaning on his rifle in a brown study. His very attitude told them that his mind was hard at work, trying to hit upon a method of escape, and they watched the changes of his countenance as well as the gathering gloom would permit, to note the result of his meditation.

At length he turned abruptly, and laid his hand upon Colonel Wilde's shoulder.

"See yur, kurnel," he said; "talkin' about that tree out behind the house has given me an idea. Can a feller git into the tree from that back winder without makin' much noise?"

"I believe so," was the reply. "There is a large limb extending to the very window-sill, and a smaller one above it to which you can hold to steady yourself."

"So fur so good," said the ranger. "Now, judgin' from a big hole I see'd in the trunk 'bout ten feet from the ground, I should say that cottonwood are *holler*."

"You are right—it is. In fact, the thing is a mere shell, so you can easily guess the dimensions of the cavity."

"So fur so good," repeated the ranger. "And I've noticed as how that big limb, as goes out to the winder, j'ines the main trunk right beside the big hole in the tree."

"Right again."

"Now, what I wants to know is jist this. That big hole is the only one I ever see'd in the tree, and it's ten feet, or more, above the ground, and I'll be obliged ef you'll tell me ef thar's another one lower down to'ards the butt?"

"There is. Down near the roots, on the side nearest the forest, there is another hole. It is a small one, however, and is almost concealed by bushes."

"Small one, hey? Couldn't a man crawl through it?"

"Oh, yes, without difficulty."

Tom Badger drew a long breath.

"Kumrids," said he, addressing all, "what to think of it I hardly know; it's a slim enough chance, the Lord knows, but it's the best thing we can do under existin' sarcumstances, and as soon as it's dark we'll try it on."

"Try what on?" asked Philip.

"We'll try and leave this house by way of that cotton wood tree out thar."

Instead of speaking, all looked inquiringly at him.

"Wal," continued the scout, "I'll tell you what I've been thinkin' about. I've been thinkin' that ef the Irish thar was able to come in by that road, it wouldn't be impossible for us to go out by the same way. But I's afeard the Injuns might kotch sight of us afore we could reach the ground, till the kurnel told me the thing war' holler from top to bottom, and that makes me think the thing car be did. Now listen; we'll go out on that limb from the winder, crawl through the big hole in the trunk, and let ourselves down on the inside, so that a painter couldn't see us. In course more'n one of us couldn't be in the holler at the same time, but we could go down one by one and creep out through the little openin' at the bottom. Thar's danger in this plan, I allow, but we've got to do it or wait hyur till the reds set fire to the buildin', and then make a dash through the whole pack, with a good chance o' havin' our skulps dried in to-morrer's sun."

No one thought of offering objections to the ranger's plan. There was nothing they would not have been willing to attempt had he taken the lead; notwithstanding the danger and difficulty they saw in the course he proposed to pursue, they expressed a willingness to follow him. Dinah, however, if she did not really object, saw two obstacles to the plan which she was not slow in mentioning.

"In de fust place," said she, "I can't climb trees, 'less I fall an' broke my neck; an' den I's so wide out I be suah to stick fas' in de holler ob de tree."

"No dang'r of that, Dinah," said Colonel Wiide. "The cavity is large enough even for your body, and as to your inability to climb, let me tell you that you must not fall—neither must you open your mouth. Do you hear? I say you *must not*, for you can better afford to act properly for once than we to lose our lives."

"Oh, papa, can we hope to escape thus?" asked Christine.

"Why, certainly, my dear child. While there's life there's hope, you know, and matters will have to look far more serious than they now do before despair will be justifiable. I believe there are fewer Indians in the rear of the house than on the other sides."

"It's right ye are there," said O'Rourke. "Begorra, I didn't see a single Indian behind the shanty whin I kem in."

"Christine, cheer up," cried Philip Campbell, seizing her hand impulsively. "Remember there is always hope in what Tom Badger advises, and remember, too, that the Indians must walk over the dead bodies of four of this party before they can harm a hair of your innocent head!"

The girl did not reply, but her head drooped upon her bosom, and her hard breathing told that she was agitated.

"Kumrids," said Badger, "it's 'bout time to act, and in course you must see into the whole proceedin' afore we begin. You understand that we're to walk out on that limb, and go down through the holler tree, and then crawl out at the bottom. If I ain't mi-took that's a row of bushes extendin' from the butt o' the tree to the edge o' the woods, and by keepin' under the shadder o' these we'll fool the heathen bootiful. Campbell thar will take the lead, and I'll stay behind till the rest are all out. Shoot me, I b'lieve it'll work all right."

They consulted for some time longer, and the plan was thoroughly matured before it was put into execution. A large oil lamp was lighted and left in the lower room, to deceive the Indians, and then, it being quite dark out-doors, the little party went cautiously up stairs, stepping so lightly that they could not have been heard had the savages been close to the house. Entering the back room they softly opened the window, preparatory to beginning the perilous undertaking that was to lead them to freedom or death. It was a dark night, and standing by the window they could only see the dim outlines of the old cottonwood, as its lesser branches swayed gently in the evening breeze.

The utmost silence and caution were repeatedly enjoined by Badger, his greatest anxiety lying in the fear that the negro woman would make a fatal blunder. Philip Campbell now stepped upon the window-sill, as he had been chosen to go first and see if the way was clear. He walked out on the large limb as stealthily as a panther, holding to a smaller one above, and pausing after each stop to dart a piercing glance down toward the hiding-places of the Indians. When he had disappeared Tom Badger lifted Christine in his muscular arms, and followed the young man. Carrying the girl, it was with much difficulty that he moved down the sloping limb through the darkness, without a single misstep or the slightest noise, and the scout would not have permitted another one of the party to undertake the feat. But he accomplished it. On reaching the junction of the limb and the tree-trunk, he paused and looked down. Straining his eyes through the gloom he saw, or fancied he saw, the form of Philip Campbell lying on the ground below, and moving slowly toward the woods. This was enough. He hesitated no longer, but lifted Christine through the large hole in the hollow tree, and let her down inside. Holding one of her hands he leaned far into the tree, and lowered her into the dark cavity till he supposed her feet were near enough to the ground to prevent injury in falling. Then he dropped her, and told her in a soft whisper to remain there till informed by Philip that the coast was clear.

Tom Badger withdrew his head from the hole, and was about to give a signal for the Irishman to approach, when something bright flashed through the air a short distance

away. It reminded him of a meteor, but when it fell upon the roof of the cabin he knew it was nothing more nor less than a blazing arrow, shot from an Indian's bow for the purpose of setting fire to the building! But the arrow, instead of sticking in the roof, rolled off without doing the least harm.

"Wagh!" growled the scout. "Commenced that game a'ready, have they? Blast thar pictur's! They won't give in now till the house are burnt to the ground. Wal, wal, ef the house goes we'll go too—to Smith's Point! Ha, ha!"

Meanwhile Christine was in the hollow tree, waiting for the summons to go forth. She had discovered the aperture by which she was to make her exit, and crouching down she peered through it at the dark woods a few yards distant. While she remained there the suspense was painful in the extreme, but, knowing how much depended on calmness and patience, she made a determined effort to compose herself, and succeeded. Presently a tiny pebble struck the tree from the outside, and fell to the ground near the aperture. She knew it had been cast by the hand of Philip, as it was the signal previously agreed upon to tell her that she might venture to follow him. Without hesitation she crept out into the open air, and began to crawl very carefully over the ground toward the spot where the young man lay in concealment. Several clumps of bushes formed almost a straight row from the cottonwood to the edge of the forest, and keeping close to these, so that the outlines of her person would be invisible, she reached the latter place in safety. There she found Campbell awaiting her, and together they awaited the coming of the rest. He told her he had seen no Indians, and believed there was none near that particular spot.

Arran O'Rourke was the next who came, and after his safe arrival old Dinah made her appearance, trembling and panting. By the united efforts of Tom Badger and Colonel Wilde, the negro woman had been guided through without creating much noise, though half an hour was spent in the operation. At this juncture a wild yell, as from more than a score of throats, rose from every side of the house, causing our friends to huddle together with gasps of terror, fearing

that they were discovered. At the same instant there was a quick, brilliant flash in the air, as if a gleam of lightning had rent the darkness from the clear sky above. But they were speedily undeceived, for a look showed them that a shower of burning arrows had been discharged at the building, and that some of them were sticking in the roof and logs, still ablaze.

Colonel Wilde and the ranger were now seen approaching, and in another moment the entire party which had occupied the besieged cabin less than an hour before, had congregated on the edge of the clearing, ready to begin the flight toward the settlements.

"Come on," whispered Badger. "'Twon't do to tarry right in the midst o' the varmints. Move on, and step light."

"Hark!" interposed Colonel Wilde, catching the scout's arm.

All listened, and heard a strange cracking and popping near by, while they became aware that the darkness around was being gradually dispelled. The truth was made apparent on the instant. *The house was afire!*

The whoops and yells of the Indians grew almost deafening now, and every moment one or more could be heard rushing through the undergrowth, frightfully near the spot where the whites were standing.

To remain there longer seemed certain death, and, as further delay was uncalled for, the party moved cautiously away in the direction of the river. By general consent Philip Campbell took the lead, Tom Badger imposing on himself the duty of remaining in the rear, where the greatest danger existed. They hoped to find their canoe where it had been left, and believed the Indians, in their hasty pursuit of Campbell, had neither taken the precaution to set it adrift, nor to place a guard over it. The colonel remarked that the hole which Philip had made in one side of the craft might have rendered it useless, but Philip assured him that it was too near the gunwale to be of any consequence. The light from the burning cabin grew brighter and brighter, and glancing back they could plainly see the yelling savages dancing in mad delight around the fire.

"They think they've got us now," chuckled Badger, "but I've a notion they'll soon change thar tune."

Even as he spoke, the shrieks and shouts began to abate, as if the savages were growing astonished at the non-appearance of the whites. Fearing their flight would be discovered, and a chase begun, the fugitives quickened their pace. Through the darkness, and over numerous obstacles, they hurried along, and hope was growing strong in their breasts when an accident occurred that caused a sudden revulsion of this emotion. Dinah, who had come near falling several times, at last pitched headlong over a stone, and dove like a huge duck into a patch of briars that happened to be in her way. The unfortunate woman set up a scream that might have been heard a mile, as, with scratched hands and face, she scrambled to her feet. The scream alarmed the rest of the party, for they knew the Indians could not help hearing it. They almost held their breath, as the savages ceased their noise and became silent. All at once, a long, peculiar whoop was borne to their ears from the direction of the cabin; and what was their surprise and chagrin when a second whoop, evidently an answer to the first, came floating up from the river bottom just ahead of them, and directly in their path!

They stopped stock-still, and for a moment not a word was spoken by any one.

There were Indians in front of them, as well as behind!

CHAPTER VI.

NOW OR NEVER.

"THAR's no use standin' hyur," exclaimed Tom Badger, hurriedly. "Neither is thar' any use goin' on to the river unless we want to be nabbed by the heathen in front."

"Then, for God's sake, what shall we do?" cried Colonel Wilde, holding both hands of his daughter.

"Thar's only one thing we *can* do."

"And that? Speak quickly, Badger—I think I hear the Indians coming up from the river."

"Don't git skeered—the imps ain't comin' yit. The only thing we can do is, turn to the right and put fur the settlements like a streak o' pig-tail lightnin'."

"Do you mean we must travel afoot?"

"Exactly. We can't ride, 'cause thar's no sich thing as gittin' our boat now. The Injuns is on the spot whar' we left it. Come on; we've got to do some tall walkin' ef we give 'em the slip."

The fugitives turned abruptly toward the east, their course now lying parallel with the river. The colonel and the ranger each grasped an arm of Dinah, and hurried her over the ground at a rate that made her tremble with fear, lest her brains would be dashed out against a tree, both of them threatening to leave her if she should utter a word or make the least noise. O'Rourke and Campbell led the way, and Christine moved nimbly along between them. The yells of the Indians told plainly that they were scouring the forest for their would-be victims, and the only comfort of the whites lay in the hope that the wretches would take the wrong direction in pursuing them. This was not likely, however, since the Indians could hardly be ignorant of the fact that the nearest settlements lay to the east, nor so foolish as to think their enemies would seek the most remote refuge.

"Gora'mighty!" panted Dinah, at length; "let me stop jes' a minute, massa; I's gittin' awful—"

"Not a word!" growled Badger. "Stop, and you die! Keep on, and you live. It's better to be tired than dead, sometimes, but you can take your choice."

"Oh, I's already took my choice. I's dead now."

"Hush! Your infarnal clack will be the death of all of us, I'm afeard. I don't want to be too hard on you, but you must hold out a little longer ef you can, and recollect you ain't goin' to mend the matter by blabbin' so cussed loud."

"Listen!" cried Christine, turning round; "I believe the Indians have ceased their cries."

Badger stopped and listened.

"Blow me, you're right, little 'un. They have put an eend to thar caterwaulin', sure's shootin'."

"Bless the saints! it sp'akes well for us," said O'Rourke.

"The rid-skins have give up the hunt, and gone about thar business."

"Don't fool yourself, Irish. When Injuns shet thar hash-traps, and git still sorter suddint like, that's jist the time they're hatchin' the tallest kind o' devilry. They're still an a chicken in the shell now, and that tells me they're comin' to'ards us."

"Pursuing us?"

"Sartin. They ain't goin' to give us up so easy as that. They failed to find us 'twixt the house and the river, and now they're follerin' us, I take it."

"But probably they are not coming in this direction? They can not know which direction to take."

"Reds ain't fools all the time. I think they know we're aimin' fur Smith's P'int, 'cause it's the nearest fort, and then I've kinder got it into my noddle that we was foddered down the river this mornin'. Anyway, thar's no use hopin' they won't take this course to ketch us 'cause they'd be 'tarnal fools to take any other."

"Then we must be overtaken sooner or later," said Colonel Wilde. "Smith's Point lies several miles away, and, encumbered as we are, we need not expect to reach it in safety. We shall be caught before we have gone two miles."

"You're 'bout right thar', kurnel, though you ain't exactly right either. But, come on. We can't afford to lose time."

Again they hurried on through brush and brake.

"Do you reckon you can hold out a mile at this rate?" asked the scout, addressing the party.

There was a unanimous reply in the affirmative.

"But why do you ask?" added Philip. "You do not mean that we will find a place of refuge a mile further on?"

"Jist that, and nothin' less," was the cool reply. "Least-wise we'll find a place whar' we can defend ourselves for a good spell."

"What sort of a place is it?"

"Wal, it's the ruins of an old stone house. A fam'ly by the name o' Jones used to live in it, a long time ago, but one night the Injuns fell onto 'em and killed every one—se the story goes."

"Ah! I know what you are talking about now," said

Philip. "I have seen the remains of that stone dwelling myself, and have frequently heard the legend connected with it. It is said the Jones family were murdered in their beds, and that even to this day their spirits may be seen hovering about the ruins. All that now remains of the house is a portion of the chimney, and a stone wall about six feet high, inclosing an area several yards square."

"Be jabbers, now, ye wouldn't be afther goin' there at all, where there's so many ghosts?" exclaimed the Irishman.

"Come on, Arran; don't let superstition master you, for you are old enough to know that spirits of the dead are not permitted to walk the earth."

"Thar' might be sich a thing as givin' that pack o' skunks the slip, by gittin' inside o' that wall," said the scout, "though, ef 'twan't so dark thar'd be no hope for us. We'll puzzle 'em fur awhile when we stop thar', that's said, but I'm dreadful afraid they'll wait till mornin', and lift our trail."

"Do you think it probable they will wait till morning, when they know we could reach Smith's Point by that time?"

"That ain't what I mean, youngster. They'll keep up the chase for some time yit, but they know we can't outstrip 'em while these females is with us, and when they've gone 'bout fur enough to kotch us they'll stop and wait."

After this the fugitives continued their flight in silence. Not a sound could be heard in their rear, but they were momentarily expecting the hasty footsteps of the pursuers to burst upon their ears, and the continued silence only urged them to greater speed. Dinah held out bravely, with the assistance of Colonel Wilde and the ranger, and there appeared to be no cause for fear that Christine would ever tire. Their progress was necessarily slow, but they knew the Indians themselves could not travel much faster through the darkness and tangled underwood.

In a short time something that looked quite impassable loomed up in front of them.

"Hyer's the place," said Badger, as all came to a dead halt. "This is the ruins o' the stone house, whar' we're to stay."

"Faith, it don't look much like a *house*," said O'Rourke, drawing nearer to the dark barrier and eying it curiously

"Ef it don't now it did once. The roof and the upper half o' the walls is gone, but it's got to be our hidin'-place fur the present. Even ef the heathen find out we're hyur, we can keep thar fingers out of our hair longer'n we could at the kurnels cabin, 'cause fire will be out o' the question."

They moved round the gloomy-looking ruins, and viewed them from every side, as well as the faint starlight would permit. There were four walls, not more than five or six feet in height, forming a square of some size, and the remains of a huge chimney rising a little above every other point.

They entered through a breach that had once been a door, and breathed more freely when they found themselves within their temporary refuge. They were gratified to find that it would serve well both for a place of concealment and a fort. Even if the Indians should discover them there they would be able to keep them off for several hours, unless their assailants should rush forward in a body, regardless of consequences.

No sooner were they within the fort than Dinah sank to the ground, blowing like a porpoise.

"Deary me, I's clean tuckered out," she said to Christine. "I declar' to gracious I feel like I'd nebber be able to take anudder step, or draw anudder breaf, or speak anudder word. Ef I ain't dead 'fore we git to Smith's Pint it'll be de greatest t'ing dat ebber recurred on de face o' dis airth. Come yar, honey, and fix dis han'kerchief on my head. I t'ink Massa Wilde and ole Tom Badger is bofe scoundrels to drag a poor ole woman like me a whole mile or more."

"Dinah, you should not call them that," said Christine, gently. "Instead of doing you an injury, they have saved your life; and you have reason to be thankful for the help they gave you."

"Law, chile, you're enough to pester de life out of a body, when you done talk dat a-way. Ought to be t'ankful fur what dey went and done, ought I?—and ebbery jump dey took knocked de breaf clean out o' me!"

"You are unreasonable, Dinah. Would you rather be killed by the Indians than to be exhausted in escaping such a death?"

"No, I wouldn't; but den you mought know de Injuns

wouldn't harm an ole woman like dis. Dey's got more humanity 'bout 'em'n dat—heap sight more humanity."

"I wish you to say no more on this subject, Dinah," said Christine, in a tone of vexation. "You are ungrateful and unreasonable, and besides you speak so loudly as to endanger the safety of all present."

This had the effect of quieting the indignant woman, and peace was restored among the fugitives.

No Indians were heard as yet, but, in reply to every suggestion that their flight be continued under cover of the darkness, Tom Badger declared it would be an act of imprudence to venture out of their fort before morning, even if no sound betokening the nearness of Indians was heard during the entire night.

A sort of couch was prepared in the center of the inclosure for Christine and Dinah, on which they were directed to lie down and rest, if not to sleep. The four men then separated, and each one selecting his corner, they mounted the walls to watch over the females in their charge. There they sat during the long, weary hours that followed, none of them feeling inclined to sleep amid the dangers that surrounded them, and guarded the fort so closely that no enemy could have come near it unbeknown to them.

As a matter of course, the night was most tedious to the four sentinels. Perched upon the walls at some distance from one another, they did not dare to exchange words except when it was deemed absolutely necessary, and the silence that pervaded the dark forest was most impressive in its intensity. As this continued for some time, they began to believe the savages had not pursued them after all, but about midnight they began to hear noises that created another change in their minds. The faint cry of a loon came up from the river, and, as if in answer to it, the dismal hoot of an owl was heard in another direction. Perfectly as these calls were given, Tom Badger asserted that they were from the throats of Indians, who were thus communicating with one another. Several times after that similar signals were heard on every side of them, and once there was a rustling in a thicket near by, as of a living body passing through it, and the footsteps that fell upon the listeners' ears sounded very much like those of a

two-legged animal. That their savage foes were all round them was thus rendered plain to the minds of the whites, and they even feared that their hiding-place was known to the cunning dogs.

But, at last, the long night wore away, and the rosy beams of morning kissed away the shadows from Nature's drowsy face. The coming of daylight was hailed with pleasure by the weary guards, and they descended from the walls to find Christine and Dinah sleeping soundly side by side. They were pleased at this, and did not wake them, but held a long and earnest consultation, and determined upon their course of action for the day.

Shortly after its termination the sleepers awoke.

"Wha'—wha'—wha' is I?" demanded the bewildered cook, sitting up and rolling her large eyes about. "Oh, goodness gracious alive! yar I is 'way out in de woods 'mong de Injuns, and I's been dreamin' how I's settin' dar at home eatin' apple-sass wid a silver spoon, and drinkin' wine outen a golden goblet!"

"Faith! it's divilish little that's left o' yer home be this time," said Arran O'Rourke; "and there's a chance that divilish little will be lift o' yerself be the time we raich the settlements."

"Papa, where are the Indians?" inquired Christine, after glancing suspiciously about.

"I can not tell, darling," replied Colonel Wilde, stooping to imprint a kiss on his daughter's brow. "By the providence of God we have thus far been saved, and as we have passed through the worst part of the danger, as it appears, we have no right to despond now. We have not been molested during the night, though more than once we heard the signals of the red-skins on every side of us."

The colonel had not forgotten to bring away a small supply of food, on leaving his doomed cabin the night before, and this was now produced for breakfast. The party partook of it less sparingly than they had of the supper in the besieged cabin, and when they had finished the supply all felt greatly refreshed.

"Now," said Colonel Wilde, at the conclusion of the meal, "I presume it is time we were beginning to carry out the de-

cision to which our consultation led us. Don't you think so, Badger?"

"I does," rejoined the ranger, glancing at the sun. "Time's too skeerce an article to throw away."

"What do you intend to do?" asked Christine.

"We intend to leave you and Dinah here alone for a whole hour, probably."

"Oh, papa! you are not in earnest?"

"To be sure I am. Badger, Campbell, O'Rourke and myself are going out to reconnoiter, and learn if there is any possibility of continuing our flight undisturbed by the Indians. We would not dare to take you out of this inclosure, not knowing but that the enemy is lying in wait for us outside. You are not afraid to remain here, are you?"

"No—but I tremble for you. Go, however, and Heaven protect you all. I shall pray for you in your absence."

"Thanks—thanks!" murmured Philip, close to her ear.

"That's my darling!" said her father, attempting to smile, but looking more woebegone in the attempt than if he had not thought of hiding his feelings. "You need have no fears for us, for we will see that we do not run into a trap. We should not leave you for a minute if it were not essential to the welfare of all, but, we can not know that we are not environed by red-skins until we make a reconnoissance. But you must not think we are going to leave you as you now are. We will hide you, so that the eyes of the wild beasts can not reach you."

"Indeed? and how will you hide us?"

"I will show you?"

The women were conducted to that side of the fort where stood the remains of the chimney already mentioned. Here was a huge fireplace, such as is seldom seen nowadays, large enough to admit the bodies of two or three men. Colonel Wilde pointed to the fireplace, and bade them enter it. Without question they did as he directed, and crouched down on the hearth under the chimney. Then the men set themselves to work, and began to pile up logs and stones and bushes in front of the wide chimney, forming a barricade calculated to ward off sight, rather than violent hands. When they had finished, the girl and the negro woman were hidden from view

They were then directed to remain there, and keep perfectly quiet, until granted leave to come forth.

In another moment the men had silently left the fort, each one taking a course different from those of his companions, but having decided upon a signal that was to call them all together if one should chance to need the assistance of the rest.

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTINE ON THE DEFENSIVE.

CHRISTINE, faithful to her promise, spent several minutes after the departure of the four men in praying earnestly for their safe return, Dinah interpolating an occasional "amen!" just to let her young mistress know that she was also kindly disposed toward the absent ones, and would like to see them come back as they had gone.

Cooped up, as they were, within the rather narrow limits of the old fireplace, with but one or two crevices, of sufficient size to look through, in the barricade, and the only avenue for the admission of light being the chimney overhead, it may well be conjectured that their hiding-place was not of the most comfortable character. But they were glad it was no worse, and their anxiety being for those who had gone out to see if the coast was clear, their own position was scarcely thought of.

"Gora'mighty, missa, I's afeard we'll nebber git to Smith'ses P'int wid our lives," groaned the cook, her dress spreading out like a balloon as she dropped down in one corner of the narrow cell.

"You should not think such a thing after what we have gone through," said Christine, in the tone of a consoler. "Amid the perils that have surrounded us, we have thus far been watched over and preserved by a Higher Power, and now, when the greatest danger that threatened us seems to have been dispelled, we have no right to lose our trust in that Power."

"I knows dat, missa, but s'pose dem gemmans git killed

and massakreed by de dirty debbils—what'll become o' we'uns settin' yar waitin' fur 'em to come back? Goodness gracious alive! it gibs me de rheumatiz to t'ink of it."

"You should not think of it then. Depend upon it, their skill in wood-craft will bring our friends safely back to us. At least I—I hope so. Oh, I pray Heaven they will not be harmed!" she cried, with a sudden burst of feeling.

"Dar, now, you isn't gwine to broke down, is you, darlin'? Dat won't nebber do—no, sah! Wipe dat big drap off yer cheek 'fore you sets me a-blubberin'. I s'pect it would e'ena'-most take de breaf clean out ob yer sweet little body, ef two o' dem yar men should go and git killed by de Injuns."

"Two of them? What do you mean? It would grieve me very much if any of them should be killed."

"I know it, honey, but den dar's two in perticklar you wouldn't like to see kick de bucket."

"To which two do you refer?"

"Yer pa—fur one."

"Well?"

"And den dat purty young man what saved yer precious life, when Dingle was gwine to tote you off."

"You mean Philip Campbell."

"Sartin I does. Hyah, hyah! You needn't turn so red and pull your apron to pieces, 'cause I knows bery well you's head ober heels in lub wid dat young scamp. Hyah, hyah hyah! Can't fool dis nigger. Hyah, hyah!"

Christine smiled through her blushes.

"Dinah, how can you talk so? I never met Mr. Campbell but two or three times before he came to our house yesterday, and, until then, never exchanged a word with him."

"Dat ain't my fault, nohow," giggled Dinah, forgetting her troubles in her mirth. "You's had plenty ob time since he come, and you knows it, too. Wha' de difference ef you ain't knowed him long? I's heerd o' folks fallin' in lub at fust sight."

"But I don't believe in that."

"Neider does I—but dis isn't got nuffin' to do wid dat. You's see'd him and talked wid him enough to lose yer own heart and captur' his'n. Can't fool me."

"Don't, Dinah! *please* don't!"

"Is you gwine to cry, darlin'? No, bress de little life ob it, I wouldn't hurt its feelin's fur any t'ing in de world. Mus'n't git mad, missa, 'cause you know I allers carries ebery t'ing too fur. Now, when I was young, and dat was a long time ago -- Bress de Lord! what's dat?"

A shrill whistle vibrated on the morning air with great distinctness, coming from the direction of the river.

"It is the *signal*," said Christine, turning pale.

"What signal?" asked the astonished negress.

"Why, that agreed upon by the men before they left us. If any one of them should get into trouble he was to whistle and call the others to his aid. This proves that something is the matter."

"Am dat a fact? Golly gracious! I's afeard it's all up wid dem. Which one ob 'em went towards de ribber?"

The girl started nervously, and clasped her hands.

"'Twas *he* who went in that direction."

"Who? yer pa?"

"No; I mean Phil—Mr. Campbell."

"Did he go towards de ribber? Den he's gwine to be killed, suah, and all de rest ob 'em 'll be killed, too, and den what'll become o' you and me? Oh, Lawsy massy! dey'll nebber come back, and we'll stay yar till we starve to deaf, or de Injuns butcher us!"

"Cheer up, Dinah," said Christine, becoming calm on the instant, as she saw the spirits of her companion drooping. "It is foolish to suppose that our friends will all be murdered simply because that signal of distress was sounded. Even should such a dire calamity befall them, we must not think Heaven will permit us to die here alone in the wilderness."

"Deary me! you's sich a comfort to a body when you gits to talkin' in dat sweet way o' your'n. I declar' you'd cure de ear-ache. Fur de life of me I don't see how you can talk so soothin' like, when you's ebery reasen to s'pose your true-lub is dead."

"Dinah!"

"Missa?"

"If you would please me, don't mention Philip Campbell in my presence again. You have no cause to believe that of which you have been speaking."

“No, darlin’, I won’t say anudder word ’bout him ef you say not. I nebber in all my born days hurt your feelin’s willin’ly, but I allers would stumble onto some unlucky sub-jec’ and make you feel awful bad. I won’t do it ag’in, dough; ’pon my honor I won’t. Pompey used to say I nebber treated him like a woman ought to treat a husban’, ’cause I hurt his feelin’s so much, but ef ebber a wife tried to do right by a husban’ I did wid Pompey. When we had dat big corn-shuckin’ up in Virginia, and all de brack folks come over from de other plantations—”

Dinah ceased speaking. She felt Christine’s hand closing in a painful gripe on her arm, and, with an expression of wonder on her ebony features, she turned her gaze upon the girl. To her unbounded surprise and alarm, she saw Christine peering through a crevice in the barricade, her face pale as death, her eyes starting half out of their sockets, her white lips compressed, and her breath suspended!

“Chile, what’s de matter?” asked the cook, speaking very softly, as she felt instinctively that the strictest caution was necessary.

Our heroine drew back slowly.

“*There’s an Indian out there!*” she replied, in a husky whisper.

A scream of horrified consternation liked to have escaped Dinah’s mouth at this alarming intelligence, but, for once in her life, she bethought herself of the consequence of such an act, just in time to check it. Bending forward she placed her dilated eyes to the crevice, and looked out into the inclosure. There, sure enough, was an Indian, moving in a stooping posture round the area of the fort, apparently examining the footprints that had been left there by the whites! He was a most ferocious-looking savage, and he was painted and equipped for war, while the ghastly scalps dangling at his girdle told that his hands were already stained with human blood. Christine had seen him enter through the breach in the wall, by which the fugitives had gained access to the ruins. Her first emotion at sight of him was a sickening terror for herself and companion; her second, a dreadful suspicion that the men had all been killed, and their tracks retraced to the starting-point by the Indians! The last was

a horrible reflection, and as her imagination quickly formed a picture of father and friends lying in the woods, dead and mutilated, her own critical position became a matter of little moment to her.

"What'll we do, missa?" asked Dinah, trembling violently.

"Sit still and hold our tongues," was the response. "Don't stir from your position, nor speak above a whisper, and maybe he will go away without discovering us."

"Yes, but s'po--s'po--s'posen he find us heah? Wha'--wha'--what'll we do den?"

"If it comes to that--"

Christine thrust her hand in her bosom and drew forth a small pistol, which she held up significantly to the astonished view of the colored woman.

"Gora'mighty! you wouldn't do dat?" gasped the latter.

"When I brought it away from home last night, it was with the intention of using it, should justice to myself or others demand it. Bat hush! not another word."

Quivering with the pain of their suspense, they watched the Indian as he moved stealthily about examining one track and then another, as if he was bent on finding out how many persons had been there. He was apparently alone, though the hidden ones feared there were others awaiting him outside. Dinah's teeth chattered till it seemed a wonder she was not heard by the intruder, and two or three times she checked a cry of terror even while it trembled on her lips.

Presently the savage paused, rose to an upright position, and glanced piercingly around. His eyes rested on the hiding-place of the two women, and became stationary! To all appearance he was looking directly at them, and for a moment their hearts stood still; but Christine knew it was impossible for him to see them through the barricade. He might have walked away without giving that point a second look, had it not been for an unwise act on the part of Dinah, who seemed determined to seal their doom. Believing they were discovered, that unlucky creature threw herself back in the chimney-corner, quivering like a wounded duck, and let forth a scream that their enemy might have heard had he been a mile away!

With a startled look, Christine saw that it was all up with them. At first an expression of surprise passed over the dark visage of the Indian ; then a gleam of triumph took its place, and drawing his tomahawk he walked straight toward the fireplace with long strides.

He quickly tore away the upper portion of the fortifications, and peered into the sequestered nook where his intended victims were crouching. Dinah continued her cries as she saw the dark face and gleaming orbs above her, but the calmness of desperation had fallen upon Christine, and not a sound escaped her.

"Hoooh !" grunted the savage. "Much good luck ! Two squaws—one like de lily—udder one pale-face of night. Wagh !"

"Go 'long 'bout your bizness, you nasty, good-fur-nuffin' nigger !" cried Dinah, endeavoring to get further away from the red-skin than the limits of her narrow prison would permit. "G'long, I say, and don't stan' dar lookin' clean frough a body so's to charm us afore usin' your hatchet. We's dangerous, *we* is, and ef you don't luff us alone—you'll git yer—yer *eye* knocked out o' j'int ! Wait till de men come, and ef dey don't—"

At that instant a bright flash illuminated the cavity for the space of a second, and it was accompanied by an explosion that was almost deafening in its confinement. Before the bewildered woman could guess what it meant, the savage had leaped into the air with a shriek and fallen dead in his tracks, and Christine was quietly returning the empty pistol to her bosom !

"Sakes ! did you shoot him, missa ?" exclaimed the woman.

A quick, shuddering nod was the only reply, as the girl gazed at the dead Indian, so suddenly launched into eternity by her feeble hand.

"Glory hallelujah ! Who'd 'a' thunk you'd done that ? Bress yer little gizzard, you's gone and went and saved our lives ! Glory ! glory ! You's got more pluck, honey, dan anybody I ebber met wid. Jes' look at dat nigger lyin' dar, dead as a fly on New Year's day ! You's a brave feller missa !"

Dinah had no intention of ending her encomiastic ejaculations here, but she was interrupted in a manner that changed her joy to speechless terror. A boisterous oath struck upon her ear, and a man bounded over the opposite wall, and dropped within the fort! He was a white man—one of Dingle's outlaws, as the letter on his breast proclaimed—and from his appearance one would judge he was more to be feared than the Indian. With a fierce scowl on his face and a large Bowie-knife in his hand, he strode toward the fireplace with the evident determination of avenging the savage.

Christine uttered a cry of despair. Her nerves were all unstrung now, and she could not have aimed her pistol with a steady hand had it been loaded. She saw the baleful glitter of the villain's eyes, and knew that mercy was a thing unthought of by him.

The outlaw walked forward till he was within a few feet of the fireplace, when he suddenly halted, turned deathly pale, and clutched his breast convulsively with both hands. He glared about him like a stag at bay, swayed backward and forward, and then with a deep groan sunk to the ground, struggling in the agonies of death!

Before the horrified women could express their wonder at the mysterious death of their would-be murderer, still another figure burst upon their vision, and a sweet, musical voice cried out to them:

"Come with me, both of you! Tarry here longer and you never go away alive! Come with me—I'm your friend."

Our heroine and the negro woman felt themselves seized by gentle hands, and led unresistingly out of their hiding-place, over the dead bodies of their foes. Here they both stopped resolutely, and turned to see who their supposed friend was.

To their amazement they saw a person of their own sex standing before them! A woman whom neither of them had ever before seen! She might have been an Indian, and yet she was rather fair for one of that race, although, beside the faint, dusky tinge in her complexion, her hair was long, straight and of raven blackness. Her beauty must have been perfect at one time, but it was sadly on the decline now, leav-

ing sunken cheeks and care-marked brow to tell of the ruin. Her features were delicately-cut and regular, and her eyes were large, melancholy and burning in their gaze. Her dress was assimilated to those of Indian maidens, by being composed of a short-skirted tunic, deer-skin leggings and moccasins, and quite a profusion of beads and other adornments. A belt, tastefully ornamented, and containing a knife, encircled her slender waist, and from her shoulders hung a light mantle, spangled by many gay and curious devices. In her hand she carried something that she probably used for a weapon, although it was a short, clumsy affair, and bore no resemblance to a gun save in the stock.

This strange being flashed upon the startled sight of the twain like a vision in a dream, and at first they gazed at it as if fascinated. Then Christine asked, scarcely above a whisper:

“Who are you?”

A cloud swept over her features, and there was a touch of impatience in her tone as she hastily answered:

“Don’t ask me now—we can not afford to waste time in idle talk. I am your friend; let that suffice.”

“Why are you here?”

“I have come for you; do not doubt me. You will be killed if you stay here longer.”

“How knew you that we were here?”

“Your father told me.”

“My father—where is he?”

“Your friends are down by the river awaiting us. A canoe is there, large enough to carry the entire party. We must hasten if we escape the savages, for they are on every side of us in large numbers, and they know you are here.”

“Why did not my father come?”

“He is safer where he is. He wanted to come, but I told him I would bring you to him.”

“You say our friends are alive—then what did that signal mean?”

“It meant that I had met one of the party, and told him how much depended on your immediate flight, and that he gave the signal to call the others around him for consultation. But, come! We lose time by standing here.”

"Stay! did you kill that man?"

Christine pointed down at the dead outlaw.

"You are inquisitive," was the half-vexed reply. "If I killed him it was in your defense. As you value your life—and the lives of your father and friends—*follow me!*"

"Lead on. We are ready to go."

Hurriedly, silently, the trio passed out of the fort.

CHAPTER VIII.

RUNNING THE GANTLET.

THE unknown helper placed herself between Christine and Dinah, and grasping a hand of each, started off on a run toward the river. Dinah was unusually silent, for she had not entirely recovered from the bewilderment occasioned by the rapid events of the past few moments, and she was now debating in her own mind whether this was all reality or not. Christine's brain was in a whirl of excitement. She trusted the strange being who had appeared to them so suddenly, but wondered who she was, and why she was in the forest alone at a time when it was infested with savage red-men, and equally savage whites? At length she ventured to inquire, for the second time:

"May I ask who you are?"

"A friend," was the laconic response. "Come on, quickly."

"But your name?"

"We will not speak of that, if you please. Maybe I will tell you my name some time—not now. Don't stop, nor slacken your pace, for we can not run too fast."

It was a task for Dinah to keep pace with her young and nimble footed companions, but with the help of the hand that held hers she accomplished it.

They ran on in silence, and they soon saw the river glistening through the trees a short distance ahead. Christine strained her eyes to see who composed the little group that was seen standing on the bank. Her heart throbbed with joy.

She saw her father there, and Tom Badger, and the Irishman, and—yes, Philip Campbell! Thank Heaven! they were all alive, and free from injury, and this female stranger was indeed what she claimed to be—a friend.

They hurried forward, and with a glad cry Christine threw herself into her father's arms.

"Oh, papa, I am so happy to find you alive and uninjured! I had feared you were in trouble."

"So that signal frightened my darling, did it? But, tell me, child, what meant that report I heard—"

"Into the boat, thar! Every one of you! Quick! fur yer lives! The Injuns are upon us!" roared the stentorian voice of Tom Badger at that juncture.

Crack! crack! crack! went a number of rifles close by, and several bullets whizzed over their heads. The next instant they were answered by the defiant report of the ranger's unerring weapon, and the death-shrick of a savage was the result.

"Put the gals in the boat, kurnel—quick!"

Colonel Wilde lost no time in carrying out this injunction, and Badger, Campbell and O'Rourke sprung forward to cover their retreat. Whoop upon whoop now rent the air, and the forms of several Indians were seen leaping from tree to tree, and dodging in every conceivable manner to avoid the shots of the three fatal marksmen. The hunters emptied their rifles whenever they were sure of the desired result, and at the same time fell slowly back to the water's edge; while more than one well-aimed shot from the savages grazed some part of their bodies. It was quite evident that every second was precious now. Concealing themselves behind the trees the savages were coming nearer and nearer, and there was no possible way of checking their approach.

At a word from Badger, they all turned about and jumped into the boat. It was a large bark canoe, with ample room for the seven persons who now occupied it, but it sunk almost to the gunwales under their united weight.

"Push off now, while the Injuns' shooters are empty," shouted the ranger, when all were seated.

He had no sooner spoken than the canoe was hurled away from the shore by a powerful wrench, and sent plowing

through the water. With the greater portion of it sunk beneath the surface, it would have been no easy matter for a single person to propel it; but there were four paddles, and four strong men plying them, and their combined strength made the disadvantage seem small indeed.

"Bar to'ards the other shore, but keep her headed up-stream," admonished the scout, as he sat in the stern, sinking the entire blade of his paddle at every sweep. Following his directions, they steered the vessel in a diagonal line toward the opposite shore, not neglecting to keep a sharp look-out ahead for enemies that might be awaiting them there.

The shouts and shots of the wretches behind them were not continued, strange to say, and as they neared the other bank they rested on their oars and looked back.

"What the deuce does that mean?" muttered Philip.

"I ain't prepar'd to say," drawled Badger, thoughtfully, looking and listening in vain for some sign of an Indian. "They're gone or hid—that's plain as the nose on yer face—but it's jist as plain to me that they're up to no good. I guess they think we're goin' to land hyur, and have gone to git a canoe, or to communicate with some o' thar chaps on this side o' the river."

"What shall we do?" asked Christine, anxiously.

"Turn the craft up-stream, and git out o' this as quick as we can, in course. Long as we ain't molested we'd better be puttin' as much space as possible 'twixt us and the imps."

The canoe was swung round by a simultaneous sweep of the four paddles, and driven swiftly up-stream. They gradually sidled off to the middle of the river, every eye scanning the wooded shores, and every heart beating tumultuously in painful anticipation of a deadly volley from the land. For a while nothing could be heard save the steady dip of the oars and the labored breathing of those who handled them, for all experienced that unpleasant sensation that one feels when momentarily expecting to be fired upon by concealed enemies. But when fifteen or twenty minutes had gone by, and still no sight nor sound told that they were watched or followed they began to breathe more freely, and to converse a little.

The unknown female who had saved the lives of Christine and Dinah, sat silently among the fugitives, her large black

orbs seeming ever on the alert. Our heroine could not help gazing at her, like one under the influence of a charm, wondering who and what she was, whence she came and where she lived? It was plain that she had once possessed rare beauty, but now, young as she seemed, it was fading like a blighted flower, and Sorrow had left her footprints on the sad, quiet face.

At last Christine whispered in her father's ear:

"Papa, who is that person?"

"I can not tell, my child."

"Is she an Indian?"

"A half-breed, I judge."

"Does she live in the forest?"

"I presume she lives with the Indians, though of course I am not certain. She tells nothing. Evidently she dislikes to be questioned, and she turns aside all inquiries regarding her name or history without giving the least satisfaction. Campbell met her while scouting about the river, and she told him of the risk we were running in leaving you and Dinah unprotected. She said our hiding-place was watched, and that you should be taken away from it, and our flight continued, without delay, she insisting on going after you herself. The Indians are the rightful owners of this canoe—she captured it for us."

"God bless her! She must be a guardian angel sent from heaven to guide us safely through this awful peril."

"Hush! she is looking at us. Say no more at present."

There was one other in the party who was seemingly affected by the presence of the fair stranger, and who gazed at her with even a greater show of interest than did Christine. Philip Campbell, sitting in the bow grave and silent, never removed his eyes from her face except when her restless glance wandered toward him. From some cause or other he was perceptibly agitated, and from his actions one would judge that the cause was nothing more nor less than this same unknown. He exchanged no words with her, but, whenever she turned toward him, seemed busily scanning the banks in search of Indians.

By this time the sun was high in the heavens. Still no Indians showed themselves, and, deeming it imprudent to

spend their strength while they were not followed, the men now used their paddles more leisurely.

All of a sudden Christine half rose from her seat, with a shudder of terror, and gasped :

“ Look ! ”

She was pointing down-stream. All eyes were turned in that direction, and they saw a large canoe, full of Indians, putting out from the shore a short distance below them, and starting swiftly in pursuit !

“ Now, kumrids, we're in fur it,” cried Badger, his eyes flashing with the fire of youth as he welcomed this new excitement. “ We're goin' to have a boat-race now, as is a boat-race, and we've got to do some tall pullin' to win.”

As he spoke the canoe shot forward, and once more the men were compelled to put forth their strength in a desperate effort for life. The Indians set up a yell and came on with equal speed, their ashen paddles flashing in the sunlight, and their gaudy plumes dancing in the breeze.

Now began a race such as the boat-clubs of our day never dream of. It was no short pull for medal or money, but a five-mile stretch against the current, with fearful odds to contend with, and half a dozen lives at stake ! The number of the Indians exceeded that of the whites, and they enjoyed the advantage of being able to take turns at the paddles, while the white men could not think of such a thing as imposing the task of propulsion on the female members of their party.

Nobody ever worked harder to win a race than did the fugitives now. To lose it was to lose their lives, and they strained their muscles as they had never strained them before with a mad hope that they might reach some place of refuge before they could be overtaken by the pursuers. They knew not where it would end. They did not care to think of that, for where could they stop with any thing like safety between here and Smith's Point ? This settlement was miles away but they would not permit themselves to become discouraged by thoughts of the distance.

They had gone, perhaps a mile, and had kept their distance well, when, on turning a bend in the river, they came upon a scene that seemed to tell them their race was near its end. Just ahead of them was a narrow, peninsula point of land

extending out into the water, and on this point were seen a number of Indians flitting about among the trees that covered it! This new danger was greeted with blanched faces and compressed lips. There were Indians in front of as well as behind them now, and fleeing madly from one party, they were rushing into the very arms of another! Not exactly that, either; though it seemed almost impossible to pass the strip of land in front without being mowed down like grain by the bullets of the enemy. Still, Tom Badger underwent no outward change.

"Don't let up on your oars," he said, coolly, "but keep right on, lickety-split, and thar may be sich a thing as goin' past them imps with our lives. Shy off to'ard t'other shore like, and work as you never worked afore."

All were now gazing intently at the Indians on the projecting point ahead. Every heart seemed to stand still as they sped swiftly on toward the dangerous spot, and saw the savages gliding down to the water's edge with their guns held in readiness for action.

The canoe began to near the shore opposite the headland as it approached the critical point, and it seemed as though the long paddles would be snapped in twain at each sweep.

Suddenly Badger cried out:

"Down, gals! Down to the bottom o' the boat!—quick! as you vally your lives! The imps are goin' to shoot!"

Just then the crack of a single rifle rung out like a knell, and it was closely followed by the simultaneous reports of several others! The whites raised their heads. To their unbounded joy they saw that not one of their number had been touched by the leaden missiles, and the only injury done the canoe was the splintering of a gunwale within an inch of Christine's hand. Yells of rage and disappointment now burst from the throats of the Indians on shore, and they were answered by the pursuing party on the river.

Tom Badger seemed unable to withstand the temptation. Dropping his paddle, he snatched up his rifle and leveled it at the savages on the land. Taking quick aim he fired among them, and then uttered a shout of exultation as he saw one of the wretches fall backward into the arms of a companion, who bore him hastily out of sight.

"**Now**, kumrids," said the ranger, resuming his paddle "thar's work afore us to a sartinty. We must go like lightnin' now, 'cause we want to pass that p'int and git as fur beyond it as possible afore them skunks load thar shooters. They're bound to give us another volley afore we can git out o' range, I allow, but the further away we are, the better our chance 'll be. When I tells you to drop down, do it in a twinklin', and put as much o' yourselves out o' sight as you can."

New strength seemed given the tired fugitives at this, and once more their speed was increased. The sharp prow of the canoe cut the water like a knife, and a spark of hope was kindled in every breast as they saw how swiftly they were going.

They swept past the headland, and dashed on into the wider part of the river above it. They saw the Indians hurriedly loading their guns, and knew another volley was to be poured into them before they could get beyond range of their shots. Nevertheless this second one might have passed them as harmlessly as the first, had not an incident just then occurred proving the truth of that old adage: "discretion is the better part of valor."

Arran O'Rourke, who had been burning for a hand to hand struggle with his enemies, suddenly realized that he had passed those on the neck of land without having obtained a shot at them. He seized his gun and sprang to his feet, exclaiming:

"Be jabers! this'll niver do, at all. I'm goin' to kill wan iv thim spalpeens, or niver return to Smith's Point!"

"Down, O'Rourke!" shouted Badger, hoarsely. "Down, I say, or by the livin' thunder you'll git shot! Look!"

There was a crash, as of a dozen or more rifles, from the peninsula behind them, followed by exultant whoops from the savages.

The boat quivered and careened—the Irishman pitched forward and tumbled headlong into the water, sinking from view like a stone!

Immediately the boat was stopped, and the order given to back astern a few feet.

"Seize him, Badger, when he comes up," cried Philip

Campbell, excitedly, "and draw him into the boat. From the manner in which he fell I think he is wounded."

"No, no ; he is not wounded," said Colonel Wilde. "The canoe turned over and threw him out."

"'Twas he who turned it over, by reeling."

At that moment one of the Irishman's hands and a portion of the arm appeared above the surface of the water. The scout made a quick movement, and grasped it before it could be withdrawn. He began to pull it toward him with the intention of lifting the unfortunate fellow into the canoe, when he suddenly dropped the hand as if it were poison, and allowed it to sink again ! Snatching up his paddle, he plunged it deep into the water, and said, in a husky whisper :

"Row on, like lightnin'. 'Thar's no use wastin' time."

"Why, man, what do you mean ?" demanded Colonel Wilde. "Would you leave O'Rourke to drown ?"

"Never mind Irish, but do jist as I tells you. He'll never be o' more use on this 'arth ! *The hull top of his head is shot off !*"

A solemn hush fell upon the entire party at this awful intelligence, but, as of one accord, every man clutched his paddle, and the boat darted forward again. The sudden and terrible death of Arran O'Rourke had struck them dumb, and Colonel Wilde and Philip resumed their work half unconsciously. But this was not the time to grieve at the fate of their companion. They were still pursued, and it would be wrong to allow even the loss of one of their number to draw their minds from that which concerned their own lives. The Indian canoe had fallen behind during the attempts of those on shore to stop the whites, but they were now coming on as swiftly as before. The half-breed maiden had sprung forward and seized O'Rourke's oar, as soon as it was declared that the latter was no more, and she was now using it as vigorously as the men. With one knee resting on a seat, her body gracefully inclined, her long hair floating about her shoulders, her glittering adornments, and the curious weapon suspended by her side, she presented a wild and impressive appearance.

At last Philip Campbell broke the silence.

"Poor Arran !" he said, sadly, gazing back toward the

spot where the Irishman had gone down to a watery grave. "He will never more accompany us on a hunting or scouting excursion."

"That's true as truth itself," muttered Badger; "but I reckon we hadn't orter feel so bad about it. He was a good feller—Irish war—and I s'pose he's gone to that place whar' they say good people live after they go under in this world."

"I have been praying for him," murmured Christine, with a look on her sweet face that reminded one of heaven and the angels. "I have been praying for him, and I feel that he is better off now than he was half an hour ago."

"How like my daughter," said her father, gazing with tearful pride and love at the dear one who claimed his protection.

"I've an idea," said the scout, "that our lives war' all saved by that very blunder Irish made. He war standin' up, you see, and made a purty good target, and every cussed red blazed away at him. That's my opine. Ef he hadn't jumped up, maybe more'n one of us 'd turned up our toes."

"True—true. Let us remember all's for the best."

They went on in silence for some time longer, all watching the swift-coming pursuers with anxious eyes.

"Kumrids," said Badger, at length, "this thing's gone 'bout fur 'nough 'thout knowin' how it's goin' to end. This race have got to tarminate somewhar', that's sartin,' and we'd better be decidin' whar' it'll be. Them red-skins won't give it up 'twixt byur and Smith's Point, and it may as well be said thar's no more chance of our reachin' Smith's Point ahead of 'em, thar' thar'd be of a worm gittin' away from a bird."

"Do you think we can go two miles further without being overtaken?" asked the unknown, turning to the ranger.

"I reckon we might, with hard work."

"Then," she continued, her eyes glowing with excitement, "it may be that your lives may be saved after all. Two miles further on there is a cave near the river-bank, which, if we can reach and enter in advance of our pursuers, you will be, for the present, safe. It affords means of easy defence,

and we could keep off a hundred Indians with our few weapons. Unless they starve us or smoke us out, we can hold our own in the cavern."

Of course this announcement from the unknown was hailed with joy and gratitude, and the fair half-breed seemed more like a guardian angel than before. But, instead of heeding the grateful remarks addressed to her, she held her peace and was again calm and reticent, her brilliant orbs flashing back occasionally at the pursuing Indians, and the muscles of her arms rising and falling at every stroke of her oar. She *did* heed the blessing of Christine, however, and tears sprung to her eyes as she gazed earnestly at the young girl and then glanced at Philip Campbell; but the unshed tears were the only sign of emotion she showed.

On went the pursuers and pursued. The latter's object was now to reach the cavern spoken of by their unknown friend, and they did not regard the aching of their arms as they tried hard to reach the place of refuge ahead of the savages. At length, when the Indians began to lessen the distance between them with rather more rapidity than had been expected, Christine and Dinah were permitted to relieve the rowers by turns. By this means the three men obtained the first rest of any consequence since the beginning of the race, and they found that it enabled them to increase their speed.

The two miles seemed very long to the fugitives, but at last the unknown pointed ahead and observed:

"Look; do you see that bluff yonder? Beneath that is the cave I have mentioned."

Far ahead, on the north bank of the river, could be seen the bluff alluded to, a low but steep elevation whose rocky face glistened in the sunlight.

"Now, kumrids, fur your lives," said Tom Badger. "We ain't got much further to go, and ef we keep on at this rate we'll make it unless we're picked off from the land."

On, on they sped, breathing hoarsely now like hunted animals run down, while their garments were drenched in perspiration. From that moment they did not lose an inch of ground although it could be seen that the Indians were working assiduously.

In a short time they were opposite the rocky bluff which was to afford them temporary refuge. By the agency of its occupants, the canoe whirled round and darted in to land like an arrow, and the fugitives clambered out on the sandy shore

CHAPTER IX.

AT BAY.

CHILLING yells rose from the pursuing band of Indians, at this movement on the part of the whites, and several guns were fired at them as they landed. But the bullets fell short, and the firing was discontinued.

The whites vacated their canoe *en masse*, and found themselves at the base of the rocky bluff, which rose sheer up from the shingle a few feet from the water's edge.

"Follow me, quickly!" cried the half-breed maiden, and she sprung toward the rock at a point where there was a thick growth of bushes. These she parted, and disclosed to the view of the surprised fugitives the dark mouth of a cave. She glided through the aperture like one well acquainted with the place, and all the rest, except Badger, hastily followed her.

Badger lingered behind, watching the Indian canoe as it came swiftly up the river, and fingering the lock of his rifle as though it were hard to keep from using it. He was seized with a desire to end the existence of one more savage before fleeing from their sight, and yet had not determined to do so. His rifle carried a long distance, and the enemy was already within range. While he was meditating a large, powerful-looking savage rose up in the bow of the boat, and began to load his gun. The hunter's resolution was formed by the very act. The standing red-skin made too good a mark to be passed by, by such a man as Tom Badger. His rifle was brought to his shoulder in the twinkling of an eye, and shading the sights with his hand, he discharged it with unerring aim.

The result was all that he could have wished for. With a spasmodic clutching at the air the Indian tumbled overboard, falling in such a manner that the canoe was turned upside down, throwing the whole crew into the water! Such a yelling and splashing as then took place Badger thought he had never heard before. For a while nothing was visible but the foaming water where the Indians were floundering, but soon their tufted heads came in view as they struck out toward the shore.

"Wal, ef that wa'n't a be'utiful turn-over I never see'd one. It'll 'arn 'em more sense than to come in range o' Tom Badger's shooter, when they know his failin'."

Turning round he dived into the bushes at the base of the rock, and entered the cave where the rest of the party were already ensconced.

This cave was not a large one. It consisted of a single apartment, which was about twice as long as it was wide, with slimy, dripping rocks, low, damp ceiling, and numberless small recesses on each side. There was an entrance at each end, that in the rear being so small that a common-sized man could not have passed through it except on his hands and knees. All this was taken in at a glance by Tom Badger, whose first act, after entering, was to look about at their new situation.

"Wal," said he, "this is better than bein' in a canoe on the river, with a lot of screechin' imps ahind. I jist now turned the whole boat-full over by a single shot, but they all swum ashore, 'ceptin' one, and I s'pose they'll be down on us in the jerk o' a b'ars tail."

"Let them come," said the half-breed, running her eyes round the apartment. "You can keep them off as long as your ammunition holds out—or until night at least."

"Guess you're right, my beauty, from the 'pearance o' things. But these holes must be guarded. Youngster, this way."

Philip Campbell came at the call.

"What is it, Badger?"

"Jist this, and nothin' less. A good deal is natur'ly expected from you and me in this scrape, and 'yur's as ain't inclined to go back on a trust. I'll jist plant myself byur to

the mouth of the cave, and you may guard the little hole back yender. We'll keep a clus watch till night comes, and that won't be long, I take it. Ef an Injun or a white man comes in sight pop him over as you would a rattlesnake, and ef he holds up a white feather let him have it all the quicker."

Promising to follow his directions faithfully, our hero walked back to the rear part of the cave, and stationed himself at the small aperture there. Tom Badger told the rest of the party to make themselves comfortable while they stayed there, as there was no telling when they would leave; and then lighting his pipe, he seated himself in the mouth of the cavern, his keen eyes looking through the tall bushes that hid the opening from outward view.

Their unknown friend now became more talkative than she had hitherto been, and occupied her time in conversing with Colonel Wilde and Christine, and partially relieving Dinah of her fears. She intimated that she had once dwelt in this underground apartment, and that she had never disclosed the secret of its existence to any one until to-day. She talked with perfect freedom and calmness, and it did not seem by design that she refrained from mentioning her name, or uttering a word touching her past life. Any hint, or direct inquiry, relating to these secrets, was evaded so dextrously as to astonish her interrogators.

"Tell me truly, my friend, do you think we will ever leave this place alive?" abruptly asked Colonel Wilde.

"You are safer here than you were in your own cabin, in the ruins of the old stone house, or in your canoe on the river," answered the maiden.

"That may be, and yet our condition be almost hopeless."

"'Tis not so bad as that, sir. I know you are deeply concerned for the safety of your daughter, and that is why you ask about our condition. But it is not hopeless. We are safe here till the ammunition is all gone."

"And then?"

"By that time we may have formed a plan by which to escape, or the Indians may have given up the attack."

"Can we live without eating?"

"I have a supply of provisions in my pouch—sufficient to make a good meal for all."

Colonel Wilde thought a moment.

"And do you not fear the scheming rascals outside will think of some way to destroy us here, or force us out?" he asked.

A shadow swept over the face of the unknown, as she glanced uneasily at Christine.

"Don't hesitate to tell the worst in my hearing," said our heroine, smiling. "After all we have been compelled to pass through I am prepared to hear any thing."

"My only fear," said the unknown, "and, I believe, the only one of your friend, the scout, is that the Indians will build a fire in front of us, and smoke us out!"

"Goodness gracious alive!" ejaculated Dinah; "wha' for would dey go and do sech a t'ing as dat? Why, Lord o' massy, does dey want fur to strangle us to deaf?"

"They will not attempt this before night, I suppose?"

"No—probably not then. But, if they do, it will succeed. Let me see—there are only six of us to die, if it comes to that, but it will be a worse death than that of your friend on the river."

"You mean Arran O'Rourke. Poor fellow! Maybe it is best that he is already gone."

At this point in the conversation the speakers were interrupted by an exclamation from Tom Badger.

Lying in the entrance with his head thrust into the bushes, the ranger had kept up an unremitting watch for enemies ever since taking his position there. He had a full view of the river, and, consequently, of the canoe that had done them such valuable service, which was still lying in the shallow water where they had abandoned it, with the prow resting on the sand. As he looked, he plainly saw a black slouched hat rise slowly from behind the canoe, until the head and face of a human being were visible. It remained in view for a single instant, then quickly dropped out of sight. But Badger saw the features and color of skin too distinctly to have a doubt. They were those of a white man—not a friend, of course, but one of the followers of Dingle.

It was then the scout drew back, took his pipe from his mouth, and gave utterance to the exclamation that reached the ears of those within.

But he instantly crouched down again and resumed his watch. A full hour passed, and no other signs of human presence were visible, although he scarcely removed his eyes from the canoe, and was certain nobody had stolen away from the spot. At the end of that time, however, the same slouched hat, and head and face, again rose to view, this time ascending till the shoulders and breast of the individual were revealed. If the scout had had a doubt that the fellow was one of Dingle's men, it was dispelled now by the appearance of the letter D on his hunting-shirt. The head was held in this position a little longer than before, but then it disappeared again.

"Blast your pictur'!" muttered the scout, slowly pushing his rifle forward; "you're a bigger fool than I'd took you to be, to come spyin' round hyur when Tom Badger's on the look-out. Jist lift that mug o' your'n onc't more, and a streak o' daylight 'll shine through it a leetle the quickest."

The last word had just dropped from his mouth when that same hat and head came in sight the third time. It now heaved upward without further caution, till the entire body of the man appeared. He was a rough, villainous-looking wretch, and he wore a blood-thirsty look as he stood ankle-deep in the water, running his eyes along the base of the rock, as if searching for the mouth of the cave.

The ranger recognized this as the time for action on his part. He quickly cocked his piece, and thrust the muzzle through the bushes, determined to make short work of his enemy; but, ere he could cover the outlaw with his aim, there was a sharp click close to his ear, and the latter fell backward into the water without a groan!

Indignant at being deprived of his victim, the ranger turned his head to see who had done the deed. The half-breed maiden was kneeling beside him, holding in her hands that curious piece of workmanship which we have noticed, and which bore some resemblance to a gun. Badger had not been aware of her presence until this moment. He stared at her inquiringly, as if in doubt. Then, looking straight into her eyes he said, half affirmatively:

"*You* didn't shoot that varmint out thar'?"

"I did," quietly replied the unknown.

"With that thing?"

"Yes."

The ranger looked puzzled.

"Is that a *weepon*?"

A faint smile flitted across the usually sad face of the unknown, as she answered:

"I believe it is not weeping—I see no tears."

"Look hyur, gal, I want you to answer me. Do you call that hing a *shooter*?"

"Certainly. You saw me kill the outlaw."

The ranger looked more puzzled than ever.

"Now, I allow this is a leetle ahead o' my time. 'Tain't neways cl'ar to me how that cussed consarn went off 'thout makin' any noise, 'ceptin' a faint click. Do you shoot bullets?"

"Yes—but without the aid of powder. Of course you are surprised, for there never was another weapon like this one."

A suspicion flashed across Tom Badger's mind. Eying the girl even more sharply than before, he asked:

"What kind o' bullets do you use?"

"Just the size of a rifle-ball."

"Yes, but what are they made of—lead?"

The unknown hesitated, with a troubled air. She looked almost pleadingly at the ranger for a moment, and then asked:

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Ef you doubts it, don't tell me any "

"I don't doubt it," she answered, with emotion. Then, glancing quickly about to see that nobody else was near, she leaned forward and whispered: "*I use silver bullets!*"

She did not stop to say more, nor to observe the effect of her revelation on the hunter, but hastily rose to her feet and returned to the spot where she had left Colonel Wilde and his daughter.

Tom Badger watched her as she walked away; then put up his pipe and resumed his duty, in a silent, listless sort of a way, as if every movement was mechanical.

"Badger, you dog, that beats your time all holler," he said to himself. "Jist to think the silver bullets are fired by a

woman ! 'Thar ain't no doubt on't, either. Blow me ef that don't kinder take me back a peg or two. Poor thing ! Them bloody Dingles have done her some powerful wrong, I make no doubt. Wal, her secret's safe with Tom Badger."

CHAPTER X.

THE AVENGER'S LAST SHOT.

FOR two or three hours after the shooting of the outlaw from the unknown's silent gun, nothing of sufficient import to record occurred. Neither Badger nor Philip would consent to be relieved, though several times Colonel Wilde and the unknown offered their services. All that was required of them was to remain with Christine and Dinah, and be ready to lend their assistance when necessary. Indians were seen frequently, flitting across the visions of the sentinels like shadows, but a shot at any of them was not obtained.

The afternoon was well advanced when Tom Badger detected something of a suspicious nature. He was looking out on the river, and he saw a small black object come to the surface, and float a short distance with the current. This at once chained his attention. It sunk and rose at regular intervals like the head of a snake or turtle, and a person of weaker sight would have pronounced it one of these. But a close scrutiny showed him what it really was. It was the nose, mouth and chin of an Indian. The savage was swimming under the water, and coming to the surface occasionally for air, evidently laboring under the delusion that, by revealing very little of his face while breathing, he could deceive any white man who might be watching the river.

As soon as he became satisfied that it was an Indian, and not a water reptile, Badger began to watch the visible portion of him closely, and to prepare his gun for use.

He saw that the red-skin was gradually coming in to shore, and supposed he was about to undertake the same game that the white desperado had attempted. Badger also supposed

that the success of the new-comer would be about equal to that of the outlaw.

The savage, in approaching the shore, soon found himself in such shallow water that he could no longer hide his body. He raised his head cautiously and looked around. Then, in a slow, hesitating manner, he rose from the water, and stood erect where it was little over knee-deep. For some minutes he stood like a statue gazing steadfastly at the bluff, seeming unable to determine the locality of the cave entrance. Then he drew his tomahawk, and began to wade out of the river, as if with the intention of approaching the bluff and looking for the hiding-place of the whites. But he had not yet stepped upon dry land, when he leaped back with a guttural exclamation of astonishment. This was caused by the sight of the dead outlaw, who had been sent to render up his final account by the noiseless weapon of the fair unknown. The Indian looked startled by the appearance of the corpse. He glanced around, as though he deemed it quite possible that he would receive a like hint from the same source. He made as if he would run away, but Tom Badger was not merciful enough to let him follow the bent of his inclination. Before he could take a step the "spang" of the ranger's rifle broke the solemn stillness of the afternoon, and a regular war-whoop burst from the lips of the exultant white, as he sent forth the deadly ball.

When the smoke cleared away he saw the Indian lying motionless on the sand without. His eyes sparkled as he saw the result of his shot, and, as from a sudden decision, he cast his gun aside and drew his knife.

"That's too good a ha'r-raise to miss," he muttered. "I'll have that varmint's top-knot ef I lose my own in gittin' it!"

Parting the bushes in front of the opening, he bounded out and ran swiftly to the spot where the Indian had fallen. Here he bent down, made a quick, circular slash with his knife, and tore the scalp from his victim's head. While thus engaged a wild yell was raised in the woods on either side, and a tomahawk went whirling past within a quarter of an inch of the scout's body. Badger gave a defiant shout, shook the reeking trophy above his head, and darted back to the

cavern like a flash. As he plunged into the bushes, a number of bullets flattened themselves on the rock, but none followed him into the cave.

"Skulp the one," said Badger, as he entered the presence of his friends. "Blast thar hides, they thought they wouldn't let me have it. I had half a notion to lift the ha'r o' that Dingle feller, but I reckon it wouldn't look well to skulp a chap o' my own color."

"Why did you want that horrid thing?" asked Christine, shuddering at sight of the gory scalp.

"Ah! little 'un, you might as well ax the reds tharselves why they skulp pale-faces. Howsumever, I wouldn't 'a' took this 'un ef I'd thought twice 'fore startin'. The imps have been huntin' fur the mouth of the cave, and now I've showed 'em right whar 'tis, so't they can make a fire right in front o' it to-night. But maybe it won't do no hurt, 'cause they can't help knowin' whar the back entrance is, and that 'u'd sarve 'em 'bout the same."

With this, Tom Badger returned to his post.

A few minutes passed, and then the Indians resorted to an artifice by which to approach the cave from the rear. Philip Campbell was reclining by the small aperture, his eyes constantly ranging over the whole space within their scope, when he detected the stratagem. The forest came up to the very base of the rock in the rear, and thickets and bushes grew promiscuously around, so that the object which now held his attention would not have been noticed two hours before. Now, he knew every shrub and stick, almost, that lay in reach of his gaze, and it is no wonder the appearance of something he had not seen before aroused his suspicions.

Near the butt of a large tree, a few yards distant, he saw something that might have been easily mistaken for a small clump of bushes. But a close look showed our hero that it bore a striking resemblance to the branch of a tree, held on end by unseen hands. He could have sworn that it was not there a minute before. He had swept his eyes over the very spot a hundred times, and was sure he had not seen it until this moment.

The half-breed maiden chanced to be standing near by, and Philip beckoned her to approach.

"What is it?" she asked, dropping on her knees beside him.

He pointed at the suspicious object, and told her to give it a keen inspection. She did so, and expressed an opinion that it was a tree branch, and that there were Indians behind it. As they coincided in opinion they both fell to watching the false bush. For some minutes they riveted their gaze upon it, exchanging a word now and then, but maintaining the strictest silence. The branch kept its upright position, swaying slightly when the breezes stirred it, but never seeming to move when the air was still. Its immovableness, and pertinacity in remaining there, was almost sufficient to shake their faith in its artificiality.

But, presently, the maiden whispered :

"Look ! it is coming toward us."

"I have not seen it move," said Philip.

"Nor have I, but it has been moving nevertheless. When first seen, it was close to that large tree, you remember. Now it is at least three feet this side."

"You are right. The thing moves as imperceptibly as the hands of a clock. This is growing interesting, and those devils must not be permitted to approach much nearer."

They watched the branch for some time longer, and soon, by careful scrutiny, they were able to perceive its stealthy and tedious approach. Inch by inch it came nearer and nearer, and its progress would have been more noticeable by looking at it twice in ten minutes, than by keeping an eye on it constantly.

Philip lifted his gun to his shoulder.

"I will shoot among them," he said, "and nip their little scheme in the bud."

"Perhaps it were better," replied the unknown. "We must not give them the least advantage."

Philip ran the barrel of his gun through the aperture, and took good aim at the center of the bush near the ground. Feeling sure that the fate of an Indian was sealed by his careful aim, he pulled the trigger.

What was his surprise, and that of his companion, when, on looking for the result of the shot, they saw the branch still standing erect as if it had not been touched? Philip was certain his aim had not been imperfect, and how his ball had

failed to hit the invisible Indians was exceedingly strange to him.

"Perhaps you shot too high?" suggested the unknown.

"I am positive I did not. Had the red-skins been lying as close to the ground as it is possible for one to get, the shot could scarcely have passed over them."

The rest of the party in the cave now came forward to see what had called the young man's rifle into requisition. But Philip waved them back, and made them understand that they were to keep away and be silent. Accepting the situation, they retired to the further end of the apartment.

Philip reloaded his gun, with the determination to attempt once more the destruction of the hidden enemies. The maiden continued to watch the concealment of the crafty dogs, and observed that it was still slowly approaching.

Once more Campbell pointed his rifle through the opening, and discharged it full at the object of his displeasure. The smoke lifted from before their eyes—and there stood the mysterious branch, as straight and defiant as ever, and coming toward them even faster than before.

"Curse the luck! what does it mean?" exclaimed the young man, out of patience. "There is one or more human beings behind it, that is plain; but they must have charmed lives, or have made themselves bullet-proof."

"It is surprising, truly," said the unknown, in her usual quiet way. "I am acquainted with many Indian artifices, but this one I do not understand. It may be—"

The sentence remained unfinished, for at that instant Philip Campbell turned upon the speaker, seized her by both arms and pushed her backward with such force that she was well-nigh precipitated to the ground.

Before she could divine the cause of this singular proceeding the crack of a rifle was heard outside, and a bullet struck the wall just behind the spot where she had been standing. Philip had seen the muzzle of an enemy's gun protruding from the strange bunch of foliage, and had pushed his companion out of the way just in time, as it appeared, to save her life. This little incident, so nearly proving fatal to one of the twain, conveyed to their minds the importance of exercising more caution in their watch. Hiding behind rocks, so that they

could neither be seen nor shot from outside, they continued to watch the approaching concealment of the savages. How a mere branch could shield their enemies from their shots was a mystery to both, until, after a while, Philip touched the girl's shoulder, and whispered:

"I see through their ruse now."

"How? What do you mean?"

"I see why my shots did not tell. They have something besides that branch to protect them."

"That must be. Have you an idea what it is?"

"I *know* what it is—I saw it. The cunning devils have a flat stone, about six inches in thickness, and large enough to protect their persons while they retain their prostrate position. This stone is set upon edge, and has been skillfully concealed by that thick foliage, which seems to be fastened to it by means of cords. I caught a glimpse of it, as one of the rascals pushed his end of the concern a little too far. They have hoped to deceive us by the ruse of the bush, but have taken the precaution to provide themselves with a more serviceable shield, which is to prevent them from being killed in case their trick is discovered."

"I suppose you are right, sir."

"And now, the question is," added Philip, with a look of anxiety: "how is their progress to be checked? I can't shoot through the stone, if I fire upon them a score of times, and we can not expect them to yield the point unless we give them a taste of our weapons."

"True—probably you would do well to call your friend, and ask his advice?"

"You mean Tom Radger?" Campbell reflected a minute, and then set his teeth together in a manner that showed he had determined on a course of action. "No, I will not call Badger nor any one else, but will put an end to this trick of the Indians without assistance."

"You, sir? How will you do it?" inquired the unknown, in amazement.

"I will tell you. Before they come a foot nearer I will crawl out and pounce upon them. If I can not harm the wretches with my gun, I'll show them that I can with a knife."

"Are you mad, my friend? Do you wish to be killed?"

"Neither, madam," returned Campbell, with a smile. "You must remember that the lives of our whole party depend on this act. In no other way can we prevent these savages from coming in upon us. They will come close to the entrance, and then make a dash into the cave, followed by a whole troop of their brethren. In that case we would all be butchered. I propose to stop them before they can do this."

"You are brave, sir, but I fear you can not accomplish it alone. Allow me to help you."

"You?—a girl?"

The half-breed's lip curled.

"I was a girl once, Philip Campbell—not now."

He dropped his eyes in some confusion, and she added:

"If you decline the assistance of my feeble arm, there are men here who will be willing to accompany you. Don't be so rash as to go out alone."

"I have made up my mind," said Campbell, firmly. "My decision is irrevocable. There can not be more than two Indians behind that stone—I think I am able to master two."

"But you will be fired upon by others."

"Don't detain me. If I am slain it will be after I have accomplished my purpose, and the rest of you will be saved. Better one than all, you know."

She said no more in opposition to his decision, for she knew further words would be useless. Philip drew his dagger and hunting-knife, and held one in each hand, ready for action. On his hands and knees he crept forward to the aperture, and, as he scanned every thicket and tree in view, he managed to keep his body out of sight of the savages who were creeping toward the cavern. He knew the undertaking was a most dangerous one, but he knew also that on its success depended the lives of his friends, and he resolved to accomplish it or perish in the effort.

He gathered his strength for the trial, and compressed his lips. Then, suddenly darting his head forward, he slid through the opening with the quickness and dexterity of a snake. He was no sooner outside of the cave, than he rose to his feet and sprung toward the impostured branch with the

celerity of thought. Here he paused for a single instant, crouched like a panther, stretched his muscles and launched himself into the air. He went clean over the moveable breastwork, and came down on the shoulders of two stalwart Indians, who were taken completely by surprise by the rapidity and stealth of his movements. Finding himself between two powerful enemies, he saw that much depended on his skill and agility. Like a stroke of lightning he plunged his dagger into the back of one of them. The keen point cleft the heart, the poor victim rolled over on his back, with a yell that was the last he uttered in this world. Simultaneously with this fatal blow, Philip made a blind slash at the other with his hunting-knife, inflicting a slight wound in his neck. He turned upon this one now, and they grappled—a deep groan and a gasp, and the second Indian had followed the first.

Philip sprung to his feet with a dripping knife in each hand. He was about to rush back into the cavern when he was startled by a pistol-report, coming from some point above, and a bullet whizzed past his ear, grazed his arm and buried itself in the ground at his feet. The course of the bullet showed that it really came from above. Before he could look upward there was a hoarse exclamation, and a rustling among the branches of a tree overhead, and in the same moment the form of a man dropped in front of him.

Philip started back and stared at his interceptor. A white man stood before him—a rough, desperate-looking villain, who wore a long, drooping mustache, a broad-brimmed hat, with a conical crown and black feather, and the letter D on his breast. In one hand he held a pistol; the other arm rested helplessly in a sling. Philip recognized him as the bandit chief, Dingle, whom he had wounded on the preceding day in order to rescue Christine from his vile hands.

The outlaw stood between him and the cave. He must pass him to enter, and this he resolved to do. But, just as he was on the eve of springing forward, his adversary started violently and reeled as if struck by an unseen hand. For a moment it seemed that the villain must fall, but he recovered himself and darted piercing glances in every direction.

"Hell and furies!" he roared; "I am shot—I have received my death-wound at last—I have met my fate from the silent weapon that has destroyed every one of my men! Great God! my whole band is gone, and now I must go! A thousand curses on the dog that fires the *silver bullet*! Ha! it must have come from the cave, to hit me in the back."

The wounded desperado suddenly whirled round, drew a loaded pistol from his belt and discharged it recklessly at the opening of the cave.

With this he fell back and expired. Philip took but a single look at the outlaw, and then, dropping upon all-fours, he hastily crawled through the opening.

"A lucky escape, truly," said he, addressing the maiden, as he crept into the cave. "I am glad the demon was struck down by the silver bullet, for I believe it alone prevented me from killing a third human being. I wonder—"

His tongue became silent, and he stood motionless. There, lying on her back at his feet, her eyes closed, the pallor of death on her calm, sweet face, and spots of crimson on her silent breast, lay the half-breed! This wild flower of the forest had been laid low by that last shot of Dingle.

CHAPTER XI.

DEATH IN THE CAVE.

"My God! she's dead!" cried Philip, lifting the lifeless form from the ground, and pillowing her head on his knee.

In a moment Colonel Wilde, Christine and Dinah, all more or less excited, were on the spot, uttering exclamations of horror, grief and astonishment. But Tom Badger, cool as he invariably was, and accustomed to death in every shape, did not leave his post.

"What is the matter?" "Is she shot?" "Good Heaven! is she dead?" These and similar questions were propounded to our hero in rapid succession, until, to quiet them, he was forced to give his interrogators a brief recital of what had transpired.

"I fear she is dead," he concluded, in a choked voice, as he tore the garments from her breast and placed his hand on her heart. "No, no; she lives—she lives!" he cried, joyfully, as he felt the pulsations beneath his hand. "Give me your flask of brandy, colonel. She has only fainted."

The colonel produced the desired article, and a few drops of the liquor were forced down the sufferer's throat. She soon opened her eyes, and looked up into the anxious faces that were bending over her, alternately scanning each one with an earnest, searching gaze.

"You are grieving for me," she murmured. "I see grief in your faces. Why is it so? I am nothing to you. Why do you feel sad for a poor, nameless, unknown wanderer?"

"Oh, please don't speak so," cried Christine, vehemently. "We are sad because you are suffering. How could we feel differently when, although a stranger as you say, you have rendered us a service for which we doubtless owe you our lives?"

Those large black eyes were full of tenderness and gratitude as they looked up at the speaker.

"Sweet girl," she said, in a tremulous tone, "I have learned to love you in the short time I have been in your presence. It is hard to bid you good-by so soon, but—"

"Oh, why need you? Don't think of dying, for you are only wounded, and will soon recover. Let me look at your wound and dress it."

The half-breed motioned her back.

"I must die," she said, her voice growing hollow and unnatural. "The hurt is past healing, and it will be useless to examine or dress it. Let me speak a word to you secretly," she added, addressing Philip.

The young man bent his head, and she whispered something in his ear. He turned to his friends and said, in tones that showed he was deeply agitated:

"Colonel, she desires a few words with me in private. Will you have the kindness to withdraw for a minute or two?"

Surprising as this request was, it was complied with without a word. Taking a hand each of Christine and Dinah, Colonel Wilde led them to the forward part of the cave.

Waiting until they were well gone, Philip looked down upon the calm white face, and exclaimed :

" Oh, Leonola ! is this death ? After our long separation, and the years I have thought you an angel in heaven, will you now die in reality, and leave me here to mourn your loss ?"

His voice shook with emotion, and a tear glistened on his cheek. She took his hand and pressed it.

" You know me, then ?" she said, languidly.

" Know you, Leonola ?—you, the love and light of my younger days ! When I met you this morning alone on the river bank, I knew you at first sight. I should have known you ten years hence."

" And I you. Oh, Philip—dear Philip—I am very glad that my last moments are to be made happy by your presence ! Now that death hovers about me, and your eyes beam upon me as of old, my frozen heart melts, and I am once more myself."

" What do you mean ? You speak of a frozen heart."

" Do you not know my secret ? Do you not know that every tender feeling has been shut out from my heart for years ?"

" Leonola, you speak in riddles. Your mind wanders."

" Philip !" Those midnight orbs, uplifted to his, showed that reason still dwelt in the sufferer's mind. " I know of what I am speaking, Philip. Are you not aware that a silent avenger has been slaying Dingle's outlaws with silver bullets ?"

" Yes."

" I am that avenger !"

" What ! You ?"

" Yes, I. The statement amazes you—it strikes you dumb—and yet why should it ? Why can not the secret slayer be I as well as another ? Look at me. I have changed vastly since the time I was a light-hearted girl on the banks of the Chatahoochee—when I loved you, trusted you, worshiped the very ground you walked upon, and liked to linger by your side in the golden twilight and draw fanciful pictures of the future. That time is gone, gone, gone ! Here is Leonola Rooke, a wreck of her former self, lying on the verge of death,

but God is merciful in permitting the old-time friend and lover to be present while she breathes her last. You know of course, that my dear father and mother were killed?"

"Yes; their horribly-mutilated bodies were found in the house. It was never supposed by any that you had escaped."

"Do you know who were their murderers?"

"The Indians, to be sure."

"You are wrong—there was not an Indian near our house on that night. The assassins were Dingle and his followers. In the dead of night they came to our lonely cabin, forced the doors open and entered. My parents were murdered in cold blood. How I escaped I never could tell, as I remember nothing that occurred after the entrance of the outlaws until I found myself lying hid in the grass outside. Scarcely knowing what I did, I counted the fiends as they came out of the house, and found that there were just twenty. I vowed vengeance on the entire band. Why I did not begin my self-imposed task at once I am unable to tell, but it must have been two or three years after the night of that fearful tragedy when I began the undertaking. The mental shock produced by the awful death of my parents must have made me half crazy, as I have but a dim recollection of what happened for a long time after that night. I have an indistinct remembrance of coming north, and taking up my abode in this cave, but what I did while here is a matter of uncertainty. About two years since my mind grew clearer, and I began to seek the revenge I had vowed to obtain. Do you see this weapon, Philip? A curious affair, you will say, but it is probable that you saw it more than five years ago. My father made it; you remember he was always working with his tools, making some such unheard of thing as this. It discharges a ball without noise, and with almost as much force as a rifle.

"Father had a pot of silver buried near his cabin, which he had secured from a vein discovered by himself. This I brought to light, and from it molded twenty bullets, one for each of the twenty outlaws. I commenced my bloody mission, obtaining a shot at long intervals, but never missing my aim when the opportunity was afforded. I found that the bandits were connected with the Indians. For this reason I

joined the Indians myself, and lived with them for some time, nobody suspecting that I was the person that was becoming such a terror to the white savages. My vow has been fulfilled. I have slain the whole band, except four men. These four have died by other hands, or disease, and that number of bullets is still in my pouch. Dingle, the chief, was the last to feel my wrath. You did not know it was I who shot him, when he tried to prevent you from reëntering the cave. But he has given me as good as he received. My revenge is complete, and I am ready to die.

Philip stared fixedly at the dying maiden, and his countenance underwent change after change. But he stilled the tumultuous throbbings of his heart, and partially composed his whirling brain.

“Leonola,” he said, huskily, “it does not seem possible that you have done this wicked thing—you who were once so pure and gentle that you would not have harmed an insect. Why did you not remember that divine passage: ‘Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord’?”

“Oh, Philip! do not let me die with a reproach from you ringing in my ears. I can not rest in my grave if you do. If the work I have done seems so horrible, remember the Indian blood of my mother flows in my veins. But, oh! I am penitent now. As I look back over the last few years of my life, it is like recalling to mind a strange, wild dream, and, now that I am once more myself, I sicken at the thought of the number of lives I have taken. Do not blame me, Philip. I feel that it was decreed by God that I should rid the country of these lawless wretches, and that He will forgive me.”

Philip bent down and pressed his lips to her forehead. Her face brightened up, and a faint flush trembled on her sallow cheeks. Her eyes filled with tears as they looked up into his, and she feebly said:

“You do not hate me, then?”

Hate you, Leonola? You can not think so?”

No, no. But I am dying now, and when I am gone I wish you to think of me sometimes, and of the many delightful hours we spent together when both were young and happy.”

"I promise freely. But why do you say you are dying? Let me dress your wound, and perhaps you will recover."

Her brows contracted with pain. She pushed his hand away gently, and replied :

"It would be unnecessary trouble. I am not long for this world. Let the wound be, and listen. Have you forgotten, Philip, that we were betrothed?"

"I shall never forget it."

"And would you marry me now if I should live?"

"Willingly—gladly! I shall never marry another."

"Nay, you must not say that. Heed my dying request, and do not remain single all the days of your life. Yonder stands a girl who is good as she is fair—her name, Christine Wilde. You love her, or are destined to love her."

Philip colored slightly, but answered :

"Surely, you mistake. I never spoke to her before yesterday."

"Ah, Philip, your heart is more readable to me than to yourself. You love Christine Wilde, and she loves you, and you would be doing infinitely wrong if you were to choose a future separate from hers. Take her, and love and cherish her as you once would have loved and cherished Leonola. She is pure, and innocent, and beautiful, and deserves the good and noble husband you would be to her. And now—"

The maiden paused as her features became contorted with pain. She gasped and clutched the air, and Philip, fearing the last moment had come, lifted her head and looked earnestly into her face. But the spasm passed off and she was again calm. It could be seen, however, that she was sinking rapidly. She was unearthly pale, a film was gathering over her eyes, and the death-dew was already visible on her brow.

"Call your friends," she murmured.

Philip beckoned to the little group that had temporarily withdrawn from the scene, and the grieved ones again gathered round the dying half-breed. Even Tom Badger left his post now, and came forward to look for the last time on the heroic creature who had sacrificed her life for them.

"Will you pray for me?" she faintly asked, turning her half-closed eyes upon Christine.

Our heroine lifted her sweet voice in a short, earnest prayer for the sufferer. When she had finished it, a faint "thank you," was returned, and Leonola seemed much comforted. For some time after this she was silent, her head lying passively on Campbell's arm, and her breathing soft and irregular. Her lips moved continually, and it was ascertained with gratification that she was praying.

She bade them all good-by, and then throwing her arms around Philip's neck she drew his head down close to her face, and whispered in his ear:

"Tell nobody but your future wife that it was I who fired the silver bullet."

He promised to keep her secret, and then she requested her friends to leave her body, with all her weapons, in the cave. These were the last words she uttered on this earth. With a shudder and a gasp the spirit went out from its worldly tenement, and Leonola Rooke was dead!

A niche of ample size was found in the cavern wall, and wrapping the corpse in a blanket they consigned it to its last resting-place. None of the clothing was removed, and the curious weapon, with which the unfortunate fair one had avenged her murdered parents, was laid beside her. Huge stones were piled in front of the niche, that no wild animal might gain access to the body.

CHAPTER - XII.

THE CRITICAL MOMENT.

"HARK! *Look!*"

It was Tom Badger who gave vent to these exclamations, about a half-hour after the death of Leonola Rooke. He was standing near the mouth of the cave, and all rushed forward to see what had called forth the startled outcry.

"What is it, Badger? What is the matter?" asked Philip.

No answer was needed. At that moment the crackling of fire was heard ; a thin cloud of smoke floated into the cavern, and on the outside rose a yell so wild and unearthly that it would have required no great stretch of the imagination to fancy it proceeded from the throats of a score of demons !

“ They are going to smoke us out ! ” said Philip.

“ My God ! ” cried Colonel Wilde ; “ *so soon ?* ”

“ You’re right thar’, ef you never war ’afore,” said Tom Badger, turning toward them. “ The imps ain’t goin’ to wait fur night to make us git out o’ hyur.”

“ Good gracious ! Badger, how did this happen ? Why did you not shoot them while they were building the fire ? You said an hour or two ago that this could not be attempted successfully in broad daylight.”

“ Wal, youngster, Tom Badger sometimes makes mistakes, and that’s jist what he’s done on this ’casion. I didn’t give the subject a second thought, or I might have s’pected this. Them devils are on top o’ the bluff, and the first thing I see’d war a big pile o’ burnin’ brush that fell down in front of the hole. Even this shooter can’t reach ’em up thar’, and they can pile on thar fuel from now till doomsday without fear of us. Look ! ”

A huge mass of brushwood just then came crashing down from the top of the bluff. It almost smothered the fire at first, and then heavy billows of smoke rolled into the cave, driving its inmates back to the center of the apartment !

They turned toward the rear entrance. As they had expected it was darkened by a pile of dry brush, and flaming combustibles were being dropped among it from above. For a moment they looked the horror they could not express.

“ Heavens and earth ! they are making fires all around us,” said Campbell.

“ In God’s name what shall we do ? ” cried Colonel Wilde, drawing his daughter closer and looking pleadingly at the scout, as the only one present who could advise them in this trying hour. “ Is there no way of escape open to us, Badger ? ”

“ See yur, kurnel,” said the scout, gravely, “ you knows as

well as I thar's only two doors to this hole, and we can't go out by either of 'em now 'thout bu'stin' through the flames, and then bein' tomahawked fur the trouble. You're an old soldier, kurnel, and you ain't afeared o' Injuns, but it's the little gal that troubles you, and I reckon you can't be comforted jist at present."

"Is there no hope at all?"

The ranger seemed disturbed by this inquiry, and he scratched his head and looked down at the ground before replying.

"Wal, Tom Badger have allers said as how thar's hope while thar's life, but you may shoot me ef I know what to say now. Thar' ain't no use keepin' the truth from you. I reckon you can see how things stand as well as I. Ef I war hyur alone I wouldn't keer a nigger's sneeze how much they tried to burn me out, 'cause I'd rush out and t'ar right through 'em like a hurricane, cuttin' my way as I went. But sich ain't the case, and hyur's as sticks to you till the last. The smoke comes in sorter slow like, and it'll be a good spell afore thar's enough in the place to strangle us."

"Perhaps, then, the Indians will allow their fires to go out before their object is gained?"

Badger shook his head.

"No danger o' that. I hain't a doubt that they'll keep the fire ragin' the whole livelong night, and only let it go down when to-morrow's sun has riz. In course we can't stand it that long. Wagh! hear the imps yellin' and dancin' around us."

"It is well that Leonola Rooke is already dead," said Christine, as she clung to her father's arm.

"S'pose so," said the hunter; "and it's jist as well that poor Arran O'Rourke was killed on the river. Like enough we'll have to take up thar trail purty soon, and tramp to the happy huntin'-grounds."

They all ceased talking for a while. Their white faces looked ghastly in the lurid glare that dispelled the darkness of the cave, and they presented a striking tableau, huddled together in the center of the underground chamber, awaiting the awful doom that seemed inevitable. The smoke grew denser and denser, and Dinah declared she could not endure

it another second, but as she had been saying so from the first, little fear was entertained for her.

As Christine stood by the side of her father, gazing silently toward the entrance, she felt a light touch on her arm, and a voice whispered softly in her ear :

“ Christine, may I take you aside a moment ? I have a few words to say that I wish none but yourself to hear.”

Her heart gave a quick bound. Even though it was lowered to a whisper she recognized the voice of Philip Campbell. She felt her hand taken in his, and she suffered herself to be led away to one side of the cave, no one seeming to notice their *départure*.

“ Miss Wilde—Christine,” said Philip, earnestly, as he stopped and confronted her, “ you are undoubtedly surprised at this strange proceeding of mine, but I am actuated by a power that can not be resisted. I suppose you heard Badger intimate how hopeless is our situation ?”

“ Yes, yes !”

“ And yet you seem calm and collected.”

“ Life is sweet, sir,” said the girl, meekly, “ but I am not afraid to die. My trust is in One who never deserts those who love Him. The ways of the Lord are wonderful.”

“ Noble girl ! I could almost believe you an angel, in your purity and loveliness. But I called you here to address you on a different subject, and time will not permit of delay. Christine—dear, dear Christine”—he took one of her hands, and looked earnestly into the limpid depths of her soft blue eyes—“ knowing as I do that death stares us in the face, I could not bear the thought of dying without disclosing to you the secret of my heart, and learning that of yours in return. Christine—darling—I love you ! Since the day I first saw you I have esteemed you highly, and within this hour I have found out that my esteem has thus early ripened into love pure and fervent. Oh, answer me—is the feeling reciprocal ?”

He paused for a reply. Her head was drooping—her bosom heaving stormily—and her hand trembling in his

“ Speak, Christine, for soon you can not.”

She looked up now.

“ Is this a proper time to speak on such a subject ?” she asked, in faltering tones ; “ when the angel of death flaps his

dark wings above our heads, and every moment should be devoted to making our peace with God?"

"I do not think it wrong to ask your love even at this critical moment. If you love me you may tell me so in a single word, and I will die happy in the sweet conviction. Oh, you are doing wrong to withhold that word, if you can truthfully utter it."

Still she did not answer, but seemed greatly affected. The smoke by this time was growing troublesome. It rolled inward in hot, suffocating volumes, until breathing became a difficulty, and Christine began to cough violently, and rub her eyes.

"The crisis is at hand," said Philip's voice close to her ear. "Say, darling, shall we not cross the dark river together, knowing each other's hearts? Oh, speak! do not keep me longer in suspense. Answer me by word or sign."

Still no reply. Philip turned away with a groan.

"She does not—she does not! Leonola was mistaken. Oh, this is very hard to bear!"

Christine caught his arm.

"Stay, Philip! dear Philip, don't leave me! I do love you—oh! I *do* love you, deeply, sincerely—more, I fear, than mortals should love one another. Pardon me for not speaking before—I could not—I—"

He did not wait to hear more. In a burst of overwhelming joy he caught her in his arms and pressed his lips to hers in a sweet, lingering kiss.

"Oh, I can die contented now," he said, and both were trembling with a species of enjoyment, even as the icy fetters of death began to bind them. "Arm in arm we will cross to the other shore, and there we'll live and love each other forever. Dear Christine—"

"Dear Philip!"

For some time neither could speak another word. The smoke had become so thick and oppressing that it was almost impossible to breathe. The fire cracked and roared, and the Indians yelled and shrieked like reveling fiends as they danced in wild merriment around the cave.

Philip felt his beautiful companion growing heavy in his arms. Alarmed at this he looked down, and dimly saw her

white face through the cloud that obscured it. He saw her lips move, and heard her faintly-uttered words :

“ Good-by, Philip.”

He quickly dropped upon his knees, and laid his fair burden on the ground, pillowing her head on his arm. It was a lucky act, for it immediately revived her, the smoke being naturally thinner near the ground than above. Removing his hat he began to fan her vigorously, and continued to do so until she once more breathed freely.

“ Water !” she articulated, huskily.

Philip was in doubt whether water was obtainable, but he determined to make the search. He rose to his feet, and stared about him. The smoke was overpowering now—he sunk to the ground again, gasping and coughing. He folded his love in his arms, laid her head on his breast, and kissed her passionately.

“ At least, darling, we can die together. When all is over, and those demons outside have accomplished their hellish purpose, then we will be united in death.”

Just then the hoarse, dry voice of Tom Badger rung through the cavern like the roar of a wild animal.

“ Hurrah ! hurrah ! we’re saved, sure’s shootin’ ! *Cheer up, kumruds, thar’s help at hand !*”

There was a rattle of fire-arms outside, and a great commotion. The hideous yells of the savages were mingled with the lusty shout and cheer of white men ! Then there was a confused scrambling about the mouth of the cave—the hurried tramp of many feet—a tumultuous rush within—a clamor of excited voices—and the fugitives were seized by friendly hands, and dragged out into the open air !

The deliverers of our friends were a band of fearless borderers from Smith’s Point. The commandant of that post, alarmed by the prolonged absence of the three scouts, had sent out this small force to search for them. They had been attracted to the cave by the fire, and the hubbub of the Indians, and, as we have shown, arrived and put the savages to flight just in time to save the fugitives from a horrible fate. Never did the parched and dying traveler of the desert greet the sight of water with more joy than was now felt by those who

had been snatched from the suffocating smoke and borne into the open air.

They were soon resuscitated, and ready to resume their journey. The whole party went on its way rejoicing, and in a short time was safely ensconced within the fortifications of Smith's Point. The settlers expressed much surprise and wonder when told that the work of the silver bullet had been seen on several occasions within the last two days. But there were only a few who had faith in the story, and Campbell and Badger, in respect for the dead, refrained from telling all they knew concerning the fair half-breed, Leonola Rooke. An attack on Smith's Point was expected after this, but it did not come. Before the savages could do any material injury to the whites, and while Tecumseh was still in the south exercising his influence among the Creeks, General Harrison's decisive blow at Tippecanoe put an end to the Indian troubles for a time.

Tom Badger, the ranger and scout, continued in the service of his country for many years, and as the evening shadows descended on his pathway of life, he was cared for by those whom he had saved in time ago.

Philip Campbell distinguished himself in the war of 1812, which followed close upon the events we have attempted to describe, and at its close, laid his sword-won laurels at the feet of Christine Wilde. Her smiles of pride and approval were dearer to him than all the loud praises of fame, and when he stood beside her at the altar, and heard her speak the vows that made her his as long as life should last, he doubted if there was man in existence happier than he.

Colonel Wilde evinced no taste for seclusion after the destruction of his solitary dwelling, and lived with his daughter and son-in-law until death took him from them. Dinah never left her young mistress while she lived.

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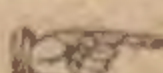
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| 439 Caribou Zip. | 494 The Sea Captain. | | |
| 440 The Privateer. | | | |

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 602 Spanish Jack. By Frederick Dewey. Ready April 14th.
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